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BLACK BOLSHEVIK

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF AN AFRO-AMERICAN COMMUNIST

HARRY HAYWOOD

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Harry Haywood

Liberator Press
Chicago, Illinois

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To My Family,
Gwen, Haywood, Jr., and Becky

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BLACK
BOLSHEVIK

Prologue

On July 28, 1919, I literally stepped into a battle that was to last the rest of my life. Exactly three months after mustering out of the Army, I found myself in the midst of one of the bloodiest race riots in U.S. history. It was certainly a most dramatic return to the realities of American democracy.

It came to me then that I had been fighting the wrong war. The Germans weren't the enemy—the enemy was right here at home. These ideas had been developing ever since I landed home in April, and a lot of other Black veterans were having the same thoughts.

I had a job as a waiter on the Michigan Central Railroad at the time. In July, I was working the Wolverine, the crack Michigan Central train between Chicago and New York. We would serve lunch and dinner on the run out of Chicago to St. Thomas, Canada, where the dining car was cut off the train. The next morning our cars would be attached to the Chicago-bound train and we would serve breakfast and lunch into Chicago.

On July 27, the Wolverine left on a regular run to St. Thomas. Passing through Detroit, we heard news that a race riot had broken out in Chicago. The situation had been tense for some time. Several members of the crew, all of them Black, had bought revolvers and ammunition the previous week when on a special to Battle Creek, Michigan. Thus, when we returned to Chicago at about 2:00 P.M. the next day (July 28), we were apprehensive about what awaited us.

The whole dining car crew, six waiters and four cooks, got off at the Twelfth Street Station in Chicago. Usually we would stay on the car while it backed out to the yards, but the station seemed a better route now. We were all tense as we passed through the station on the way to the elevated which would take us to the Southside and home. Suddenly a white trainman accosted us.

"Hey, you guys going out to the Southside?"

"Yeah, so what?" I said, immediately on the alert, thinking he might start something.

"If I were you I wouldn't go by the avenue." He meant Michigan Avenue which was right in front of the station.

"Why?"

"There's a big race riot going on out there, and already this morning a couple of colored soldiers were killed coming in unsuspectingly. If I were you I'd keep off the street, and go right out those tracks by the lake."

We took the trainman's advice, thanked him, and turned toward the tracks. It would be much slower walking home, but if he were right, it would be safer. As we turned down the tracks toward the Southside of the city, towards the Black ghetto, I thought of what I had just been through in Europe and what now lay before me in America.

On one side of us lay the summer warmness of Lake Michigan. On the other was Chicago, a huge and still growing industrial center of the nation, bursting at its seams; brawling, sprawling Chicago, "hog butcher for the nation" as Carl Sandburg had called it.

As we walked, I remembered the war. On returning from Europe, I had felt good to be alive. I was glad to be back with my family—Mom, Pop and my sister. At twenty-one, my life lay before me. What should I do? The only trade I had learned was waiting tables. I hadn't even finished the eighth grade. Perhaps I should go back to France, live there and become a French citizen? After all, I hadn't seen any Jim Crow there.

Had race prejudice in the U.S. lessened? I knew better. Conditions in the States had not changed, but we Blacks had. We were determined not to take it anymore. But what was I walking into?

Southside Chicago, the Black ghetto, was like a besieged city. Whole sections of it were in ruins. Buildings burned and the air was heavy with smoke, reminiscent of the holocaust from which I had recently returned.

Our small band, huddled like a bunch of raw recruits under machine gun fire, turned up Twenty-sixth Street and then into the heart of the ghetto. At Thirty-fifth and Indiana, we split up to go our various ways; I headed for home at Forty-second Place and Bowen. None of us returned to work until the riot was over, more than a week later.

The battle at home was just as real as the battle in France had been. As I recall, there was full-scale street fighting between Black and white. Blacks were snatched from streetcars and beaten or killed; pitched battles were fought in ghetto streets; hoodlums roamed the neighborhood, shooting at random. Blacks fought back.

As I saw it at the time, Chicago was two cities. The one was the Chamber of Commerce's city of the "American Miracle," the Chicago of the 1893 World Columbian Exposition. It was the new industrial city which had grown in fifty years from a frontier town to become the second largest city in the country.

The other, the Black community, had been part of Chicago almost from the time the city was founded. Jean Baptiste Pointe DuSable, a Black trapper from French Canada, was the first settler. Later came fugitive slaves, and after the Civil War—more Blacks, fleeing from post-Reconstruction terror, taking jobs as domestics and personal servants.

The large increase was in the late 1880s through World War I, as industry in the city expanded and as Blacks streamed north following the promise of jobs, housing and an end to Jim Crow lynching. The Illinois Central tracks ran straight through the deep South from Chicago to New Orleans, and the Panama Limited made the run every day.

Those that took the train north didn't find a promised land. They found jobs and housing, all right, but they had to compete with the thousands of recent immigrants from Europe who were also drawn to the jobs in the packing houses, stockyards and steel mills.

The promise of an end to Jim Crow was nowhere fulfilled. In those days, the beaches on Lake Michigan were segregated. Most were reserved for whites only. The Twenty-sixth Street Beach, close to the Black community, was open to Blacks—but only as long as they stayed on their own side.

The riot had started at this beach, which was then jammed with a late July crowd. Eugene Williams, a seventeen-year-old Black youth, was killed while swimming off the white side of the beach. The Black community was immediately alive with accounts of what had happened—that he had been murdered while swimming, that a group of whites had thrown rocks at him and killed him, and that the policeman on duty at the beach had refused to make any arrests.

This incident was the spark that ignited the flames of racial animosity which had been smoldering for months. Fighting between Blacks and whites broke out on the Twenty-sixth Street beach after Williams's death. It soon spread beyond the beach and lasted over six days. Before it was over, thirty-eight people—Black and white—were dead, 537 injured and over 1,000 homeless.

The memory of this mass rebellion is still very sharp in my mind. It was the great turning point in my life, and I have dedicated myself to the struggle against capitalism ever since. In the following pages of my autobiography, I have attempted to trace the development of that struggle in the hopes that today's youth can learn from both our successes and failures. It is for the youth and the bright future of a socialist USA that this book has been written.

Chapter 1

A Child of Slaves

I was born in South Omaha, Nebraska, on February 4, 1898—the youngest of the three children of Harriet and Haywood Hall. Otto, my older brother, was born in May 1891; and Eppa, my sister, in December 1896.

The 1890s had been a decade of far-reaching structural change in the economic and political life of the United States. These were fateful years in which the pattern of twentieth century subjugation of Blacks was set. A young U.S. imperialism was ready in 1898 to shoulder its share of the "white man's burden" and take its "manifest destiny" beyond the Pacific Coast and the Gulf of Mexico. In the war against Spain, it embarked on its first "civilizing" mission against the colored peoples of the Philippines and the "mixed breeds" of Cuba and Puerto Rico. In the course of the decade and a half following the Spanish-American War, the two-faced banner of racism and imperialist "benevolence" was carried to the majority of the Caribbean countries and the whole of Latin America.

"The echo of this industrial imperialism in America," said W.E.B. DuBois, "was the expulsion of Black men from American democracy, their subjection to caste control and wage slavery."[1] In 1877, the Hayes-Tilden agreement had successfully aborted the ongoing democratic revolution of Reconstruction in the South. Blacks were sold down the river, as northern capitalists, with the assistance of some former slaveholders, gained full economic and political control in the South. Henceforward, it was assured that the future development of the region would be carried out in complete harmony with the interests of Wall Street. The following years saw the defeat of the Southern based agrarian populist movement, with its promise of Black and white unity against the power of monopoly capital. The counter-revolution against Reconstruction was in full swing.

Beginning in 1890, the Southern state legislatures enacted a series of disenfranchisement laws. Within the next sixteen years, these laws were destined to completely abrogate the right of Blacks to vote. This same period saw the revival of the notorious Black Codes, the resurgence of the hooded terror of the Ku Klux Klan and the defeat for reelection in 1905 of the last Black congressman surviving the Reconstruction period. Jim Crow laws enforcing segregation in public facilities were enacted by Southern states and municipal governments. The U.S. Supreme Court upheld Jim Crow in the *Plessy vs. Ferguson* decision in 1896, declaring that legislation is powerless to eradicate "racial instincts" and establishing the principle of "separate but equal." This decision was only reversed in 1954, when the U.S. Supreme Court held that separate facilities were inherently unequal.

At the time when I was born, the Black experience was mainly a Southern one. The overwhelming majority of Black people still resided in the South. Most of the Black inhabitants of South Omaha were refugees from the twenty-year terror of the post-Reconstruction period. Omaha itself, despite its midwestern location, did not escape the terror completely, as indicated by the lynching of a Black man, Joe Coe, by a mob in 1891. Many people had relatives and families in the South. Some had trekked up to Kansas in 1879 under the leadership of Henry Adams of Louisiana and Moses "Pap" Singleton of Tennessee, and many had then continued further north to Omaha and Chicago.

My parents were born slaves in 1860. They were three years old at the time of the Emancipation Proclamation. My Father was born on a plantation in Martin County, Tennessee, north of Memphis. The plantation was owned by Colonel Haywood Hall, whom my Father remembered as a kind and benevolent man.

When the slaves were emancipated in 1863, my Grandfather, with the consent of Mr. Hall, took both the given name and surname of his former master.

I never knew Grandfather Hall, as he died before I was born. According to my Father and uncles, he was—as they said in those days—"much of a man." He was active in local Reconstruction politics and probably belonged to the Black militia. Although Tennessee did not have a Reconstruction government, there were many whites who supported the democratic aims that were pursued during the Reconstruction period.

But Tennessee was also the home of the Ku Klux Klan, where it was first organized after the Civil War. In the terror that followed the Hayes-Tilden agreement, these "night riders" had marked my Grandfather out as a "bad nigger" for lynching. At first they were deterred because of the paternalism of Colonel Hall. Many of Hall's former slaves still lived on his plantation after the war ended, and the colonel had let it be known that he would kill the first "son-of-a-bitch" that trespassed on his property and tried to terrorize his "nigrahs."

But the anger of the night riders, strengthened by corn liquor, finally overcame their fear of Colonel Hall. My Father, who was about fifteen at the time, described what happened. One night the Klansmen rode onto the plantation and headed straight for Grandfather's cabin. They broke open the door and one poked his head into the darkened cabin. "Hey, Hall's nigger—where are you?"

My Grandfather was standing inside and fired his shotgun point blank at the hooded head. The Klansman, half his head blown off, toppled onto the floor of the cabin, and his companions mounted their horses and fled. Grandmother, then pregnant, fell against the iron bed.

Grandfather got the family out of the cabin and they ran to the "big house" for protection. It was obvious they couldn't stay in Tennessee, so the Colonel hitched up a wagon and personally drove them to safety, outside of Martin County. Some of Grandfather's family were already living in Des Moines, Iowa, so the Hall family left by train for Des Moines the following morning. The shock of this experience was so great that Grandmother gave birth prematurely to their third child—my Uncle George who lived to be ninety-five. Grandmother, however, became a chronic invalid and died a few years after the flight from Tennessee.

Father was only in his teens when the family left for Des Moines, so he spent most of his youth there. In the late 1880s, he left and moved to South Omaha where there was more of a chance to get work. He got a job at Cudahy's Packing Company, where he worked for more than twenty years—first as a beef-lugger (loading sides of beef on refrigerated freight cars), and then as a janitor in the main office building. Not long after his arrival, he met and married Mother—Harriet Thorpe—who had come up from Kansas City, Missouri, at about the same time.

Father was powerfully built—of medium height, but with tremendous breadth (he had a forty-six-inch chest and weighed over 200 pounds). He was an extremely intelligent man. With little or no formal schooling, he had taught himself to read and write and was a prodigious reader. Unfortunately, despite his great strength, he was not much of a fighter, or so it seemed to me. In later years, some of the old slave psychology and fear remained. He was an ardent admirer of Booker T. Washington who, in his Atlanta compromise speech of 1895, had called on Blacks to submit to the racist status quo.

Uncle George was the opposite. He would brook no insult and had been known to clean out a whole barroom when offended. The middle brother, Watt, was also a fighter and was especially dangerous if he had a knife or had been drinking. I remember both of them complaining of my Father's timidity.

My Mother's family also had great fighting spirit. Her father, Jerry Thorpe, was born on a plantation near Bowling Green, Kentucky. He was illiterate, but very smart and very strong. Even as an old man, his appearance made us believe the stories that were told of his strength as a young man. When he was feeling fine and happy, his exuberance would get the best of him and he'd grab the largest man around, hoist him on his shoulders, and run around the yard with him.

Grandfather Thorpe was half Creek Indian and had an Indian profile with a humped nose and high cheekbones. His hair was short and curly and he had a light brown complexion. He had a straggly white beard that he tried to cultivate into a Van Dyke. He said his father was a Creek Indian and his mother a Black plantation slave. No one knew his exact age, but we made a guess based on a story he often told us.

He was about six or seven years old when, he said, "The stars fell."

"When was that, Grandpa?"

"Oh, one night the stars fell, I remember it very clearly. The skies were all lit up by falling stars. People were scared almost out of their wits. The old master and mistress and all the slaves were running out on the road, falling down on their knees to pray and ask forgiveness. We thought the Judgement Day had surely come. Glory Hallelujah! It was the last fire! The next day, the ground was all covered with ashes!"

At first we thought all of that was just his imagination, something he had fantasized as a child and then remembered as a real event. But when my older brother Otto was in high school, he got interested in astronomy and came across a reference to a meteor shower of 1833. We figured out that was what Grandfather Thorpe had been talking about, so we concluded that he was born around 1825 or 1826.

Grandfather Thorpe was filled with stories, many about slavery.

"Chillen, I've got scars I'll carry to my grave." He would show us the welts on his back from slave beatings (my Grandmother also had them). Most of his beatings came from his first master in Kentucky. But he was later sold to a man in Missouri, whom he said treated him much better. This may have been due in part to his value as a slave—he was skilled both as a carpenter and cabinetmaker.

Grandfather had many stories to tell about the Civil War. He was in Missouri at the time, living in an area that was first taken by a group known as Quantrell's raiders (a guerrilla-like band of irregulars who fought for the South) and then by the Union forces.

When the Union soldiers first came into the plantations, they would call in slaves from the fields and make them sit down in the great drawing room of the house. They would then force the master and mistress and their family to cook and serve for the slaves. Grandfather told us that the soldiers would never eat any of the food that was served, because they were afraid of getting poisoned.

The master on the plantation was generally decent when it became clear that the Union forces were going to control the area for awhile. At that time, Grandfather and my Grandmother Ann lived on adjacent plantations somewhere near Moberly, Missouri. Grandfather was allowed to visit Ann on weekends. Often on Sundays when he went to make a visit, he was challenged by Union guards. They would roughly demand to know his mission. My Grandfather and Grandmother got married, with the agreement of their two masters, and eventually had a family of five daughters and two sons. Grandfather Thorpe was given a plot of land in return for his services as a carpenter, but the family soon moved into Moberly. As the children reached working age, the family began to break up, but the girls always remained very close. They came back to visit frequently and never broke family ties as the boys had.

My Mother, Harriet, was born when Grandmother was a slave on the plantation of Squire Sweeney in Howard County, Missouri. After the family moved into Moberly, Mother worked for a white family in town. She later went to St. Joseph, Missouri, to work for another white family. One day, while she was at work in St. Joseph, she heard a shot and then screams from down the street. She ran out to see what had happened. There was a great commotion and a crowd of people was gathering in front of the house next door.

The family living there went by the name of Howard—a man, wife and two children. Both the man and his wife were church members; they appeared to be a most respectable couple. Mrs. Howard had been very active in church affairs and socials. Her husband was frequently absent because, she said, he was a traveling salesman and his work took him out of town for long periods of time.

What the neighbors were not aware of was that "Mr. Howard" was none other than the legendary Jesse James. He was shot in the back while hanging a picture in his house. The man who killed him was Robert Ford—a member of Jesse's own gang who had turned traitor for a bribe offered by the Burns Detective Agency.

When my Mother did the laundry, I remember she would often sing the "Ballad of Jesse James"—a song which became popular after his death.

Jesse James was a man—he killed many a man,
The man that robbed that Denver train.
It was a dirty little coward
Who shot Mr. Howard,
And they laid Jesse James in his grave.

Oh the people held their breath
When they heard of Jesse's death,
And they wondered how he came to die.
He was shot on the sly
By little Robert Ford,
And they laid poor Jesse in his grave.

In 1893, my Mother went to Chicago to visit her sister and see the Exposition. She said she saw Frank James, Jesse's brother. He was out of prison then, a very dignified old man with a long white beard. He had been hired to ride around as an attraction at one of the exhibitions.

Mother kept moving up to the north by stages. After the job in St. Joseph, she found work in St. Louis. She arrived to find the city in a tense situation—the whole town was on the verge of a race riot. The immediate cause was the murder of an Irish cop named Brady. The Black community was elated, for Brady was a "nigger-hating cop" who carved notches on his pistol to show the number of Blacks he had killed. Brady finally met his end at the hands of a "bad" Black man who ran a gambling house in Brady's district.

The gambling, of course, was illegal. But as was often the case, the cops were paid off with a "cut" from the takings of the house. As the story was told to me, Brady and the gambler met on the street one day and got into an argument. Brady accused the gambler of not giving him his proper "cut." This was denied vehemently. Brady then threatened to close the place down. The Black man told him, "Don't you come into my place when the game's going on!" He then turned and walked off. The scene was witnessed by several Blacks, and the news of how the gambler had defied Brady spread immediately throughout the Black district.

This was bad stuff for Brady. It might lead to "niggers gettin' notions," as the cops put it. A few days passed, and Brady made his move. He went to the gambling house when the game was on and was shot dead.

Some anonymous Black bard wrote a song about it all:

Brady, why didn't you run,
You know you done wrong.
You came in the room when the game was going on!
Brady went below looking mighty curious.
Devil said, "Where you from?"
"I'm from East St. Louis."
"East St. Louie, come this way
I've been expecting you every day!"

The song was immediately popular in the Black community and became a symbol of rebellious feelings. Mother said that when she arrived in St. Louis, Blacks were singing this song all over town. The police realized the danger in such "notions" and began to arrest anyone they caught singing it. Forty years later, I was pleasantly surprised to hear Carl Sandburg sing the same song as part of his repertoire of folk ballads of the midwest. I had not heard it since Mother had sung it to us.

Mother later moved to Kansas City, Missouri, and then to South Omaha. Her marriage there to my Father was her second. As a very young girl in Moberly, she had married John Harvey, but he was, to use her words, "a no-good yellah nigger, who expected me to support him." They had one child, Gertrude, before he deserted her.

Gertie came to Omaha some time after my Mother, and married my Father's youngest brother, George. I have a feeling that Mother promoted this match; the two hard-working, sober Hall brothers must have been quite a catch!

As I remember Mother in my childhood years, she was a small, brown-skinned woman, rather on the plumpish side, with large and beautiful soft brown eyes. She had the humped, Indian nose of the Thorpe family.

My first memory of her is hearing her sing as she did housework. She had a melodious contralto voice and what seemed to me to be an endless and varied repertoire. Much of what I know about this period, I learned from her songs. These included lullabies ("Go to Sleep You Little Pickaninny, Mamma's Gonna Swat You if You Don't") and many spirituals and jubilee songs. There were also innumerable folk ballads, and the popular songs of her day like "Down at the Ball" and "Where Did You Get That Hat?" Then there was the old song the slaves sang about their masters fleeing the Union Army—"The Year of Jubilo."

Oh darkies, have you seen the Massah with
the mustache on his face?
He was gwine down de road dis mornin' like
he's gwine to leave dis place.
Oh, de Massah run, ha ha!
And the darkies sing, ho ho!
It must be now the Kingdom comin' and de
year of Jubilo!

Mother never went to school a day in her life, but she had a phenomenal memory and was a virtual repository of Black folklore. My brother Otto taught her to read and write when she was forty years old. She told stories of life on the plantations, of the "hollers" they used. When a slave wanted to talk to a friend on a neighboring plantation, she would throw back her head and half sing, half yell: "Oh, Bes-sie, I wa-ant to see you." Often you could hear one of the "hollers" a mile away.

When Mother was a girl, camp meetings were a big part of her life. She had songs she remembered from the meetings, like "I Don't Feel Weary, No Ways Tired," and she would imitate the preachers with all of their promises of fire and brimstone. Later, when we lived in South Omaha, she was very active in the African Methodist Episcopal Church. As a means of raising funds, she used to organize church theatricals. Otto would help her read the plays; she would then direct them and usually play the leading role herself. She was a natural mimic. I heard her go through entire plays from beginning to end, imitating the voices (even the male ones) and the actions of the performers.

In addition to caring for Otto, Eppa and myself, Mother got jobs catering parties for rich white families in North Omaha. She would bring us back all sorts of goodies and leftovers from these parties. Sometimes she would get together with her friends among the other domestics, and they would have a great time panning their employers and exchanging news of the white folks' scandalous doings.

Mother had the great fighting spirit of her family. She was a strong-minded woman with great ambition for her children, especially for us boys. Eppa, who was a plain Black girl, was sensitive but physically tough, courageous, and a regular tomboy. Worried about her future, Mother insisted that she learn the piano and arranged for her to take lessons at twenty-five cents each. Though she learned to play minor classics such as "Poet and Peasant," arias from such operas as *Aida* and *Il Trovatore,* accompanied the choir and so on, Eppa never liked music very much and was not consoled by it the way Mother was.

As a wife, Mother had a way of making Father feel the part of the man in the house. She flattered his ego and always addressed him as "Mr. Hall" in front of guests and us children.

LIFE IN SOUTH OMAHA

You ask what town I love the best.
South Omaha, South Omaha!
The fairest town of all the rest,
South Omaha, South Omaha!
Where yonder's Papillion's limp stream
To where Missouri's waters gleam.
Oh, fairest town, oh town of mine,
South Omaha, South Omaha!

In the early part of the century, the days of my youth, South Omaha was an independent city. In 1915, it was annexed to become part of the larger city of Omaha. Like many midwestern towns, the city took its name from the original inhabitants of the area. In this case, it was the Omaha Indians of the Sioux tribal family. The area was a camping ground of the Lewis and Clark Expedition of 1804. It grew in importance when it became a licensed trading post and an important outfitting point during the Colorado Gold Rush. But the main growth of South Omaha came in the 1880s as the meat packing industry developed.

In 1877, the first refrigerated railroad cars were perfected. This made it possible to slaughter livestock in the midwest and ship the meat to the large markets in eastern cities. As a result, the meat packing industry grew tremendously in the midwest.

The city leaders saw the opportunity and encouraged the expanding packing industry to settle there—offering them special tax concessions and so forth. The town, situated on a plateau back from the "big muddy" (the Missouri River), began to grow. Soon it was almost an industrial suburb of Omaha and was one of the three largest packing centers in the country. All of the big packers of the time—Armour, Swift, Wilson and Cudahy—had big branches there. Cudahy's main plant was in South Omaha.

The industry brought with it growing railroad traffic. As a boy, I watched the dozens of lines of cars as they carried livestock in from the west and butchered meat to ship out to the east. The Burlington; the Chicago and Northwestern; the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific; the Illinois Central; the Rock Island; the Union Pacific—all of these lines had terminals there. By 1910, Omaha was the fourth largest railway center in the country.

When I was born in 1898, South Omaha was a bustling town of about 20,000. Most of these 20,000 people were foreign-born and first generation immigrants. The two largest groups were the Irish and the Bohemians (or Czechs). There was a sprinkling of other Slavic groups—Poles, Russians, Serbs—as well as Germans, Greeks and Italians.

The Bohemians were the largest ethnic group in town. They lived mainly in the southern part of town, towards the river, in the

Brown Park and Albright sections. One thing that impressed me was their concern with education. They were a cultured group of people. I can't remember any of them being illiterate and they had their own newspaper. They were involved in the political wheelings and dealings of the town and were successful at it. At one time, both the mayor and chief of police were Bohemians.

The Irish were the second largest group, scattered throughout the town. The newly arrived poor "shanty" Irish would first settle on Indian Hill, near the stockyards. There were two classes of Irish— the "shanty" Irish on the one hand, and the "old settlers" or "lace curtain" Irish on the other. This second group, who had settled only one generation before, was mostly made up of middle class, white collar, civil service and professional workers who lived near North Omaha. There were also a few Irish who were very rich; managers and executives who lived in Omaha proper. They had become well assimilated into the community. The tendency was for the poorer Irish to live in South Omaha, and those who had "made it" to one degree or another would move up to North Omaha or Omaha proper.

There were only a few dozen Black families in South Omaha, scattered throughout the community. There was no Black ghetto and, as I saw it, no "Negro problem." This was due undoubtedly to our small numbers, although there was a relatively large number of Blacks living in North Omaha. The Black community there had grown after Blacks were brought in as strikebreakers during the 1894 strike in the packing industry, but no real ghetto developed until after World War I.

Our family lived in the heart of the Bohemian neighborhood in South Omaha. Nearly all our neighbors were Bohemians. They came from many backgrounds; there were workers and peasants, professionals, artists, musicians and other skilled artisans, all fleeing from the oppressive rule of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

They were friendly people, and kept up their language and traditions. On Saturdays, families would gather at one of the beer gardens to sing and dance. I remember watching them dance scottisches and polkas, listening to the beautiful music of their bands and orchestras, or running after their great marching bands when they were in a parade. On special occasions, they would bring out their colorful costumes. Much of their community life centered around the gymnastic clubs—Sokols or Turners' Halls—which they had established.

There were differences in how the ethnic groups related to each other and to the Blacks in town. In those days, Indian Hill was the stomping ground of teenage Irish toughs. One day, a mob of predominantly Irish youths ran the small Greek colony out of town when one of their members allegedly killed an Irish cop. I remember seeing the Greek community leaving town one Sunday afternoon. There were men, women and children (about 100 in all) walking down the railroad tracks, carrying everything they could hold. Some of their houses had been burned and a few of them had been beaten up in town.

We should have seen the danger for us in this, but one Black man even boasted to my Father about how he had helped run the Greeks out. My Father called him a fool. "What business did you have helping that bunch of whites? Next time it might be you they run out!" The incident was an ominous sign of tensions that were to come many years later.

At the time, however, our family got along well with all the immigrant families in our immediate neighborhood. I loved the sweet haunting melodies of the Irish folk ballads: "Rose of Tralee," "Mother Machree" and many of the popular songs, like "My Irish Molly-O" and "Augraghawan, I Want to Go Back to Oregon."

There was a Bohemian couple living next door. On occasion, Mr. Rehau would get a bit too much under his belt. He'd come home and really raise hell. When this happened, Mrs. Rehau scurried to Officer Bingham, the Black cop, to get some help. I remember one afternoon when Bingham came to lend a hand in taming him. The Bohemian was a little guy compared to him. Officer Bingham threw him down out in the yard and plunked himself down on Rehau's back.

Dust flew as he kicked and thrashed and tried to get out from under the Black man. Bingham just "rode the storm" and when Rehau raised his head, he'd smack him around until the rebellion subsided.

"Had enough?" he'd yell at his victim. "You gonna behave now and mind what Mrs. Rehau says?" All the while, she was running around them, waving her apron.

"Beat him some more, Mr. Bingham, please! Make him be good."

Finally, either Bingham got tired or Mr. Rehau just gave out and peace returned to the neighborhood.

"Police and community relations" were less tense then. The cops knew how to control a situation without using guns. Often this meant they'd get into actual fist fights. In those days, there was a big Black guy in town named Sam, a beef lugger like my Father. Sam was a nice quiet guy, but on occasion he'd go on a drunk and fight anyone within arm's length (which was a big area). The cops generally handled it by fighting it out with him.

But I remember one time Sam really caused a row. He was outside a bar on J Street, up in Omaha proper. During the course of his drunk, he'd beaten up five or six of the regular cops. This called for extreme measures. Briggs, the chief of police, came to the scene to restore law and order. He marched up to Sam and threw out his chest. "Now Sam, it's time for you to behave, you hear?" He even pulled out his thirty-eight to show he meant business.

But Sam wasn't ready to behave. He came at Briggs, intending to lay him out like he'd done with the other officers. Briggs backed up, one step at a time. "Sam, you stop. You hear me Sam? Time to stop, now." Sam forced Briggs all the way back to his carriage. Once Briggs was in, he delivered his final threat: "Sam, you come down to City Hall on Monday and see me. This just can't happen this way."

Briggs drove off. Monday morning came and Sam went down to City Hall. He was fined for being drunk and disorderly. He didn't fight the court and willingly paid the fine. It seemed like an unwritten agreement. The cops wouldn't shoot when Sam went on a spree. When it was over, Sam would go and pay his fine and that would end the whole business.

Our family was the only Black family in our neighborhood, and we were pretty well insulated from the racist pressures of the outside world. As children we were only very dimly aware of what

DuBois called the "veil of color between the races."

I first became aware of the veil, not from anything that happened in the town, but from what my parents and grandparents told me of how Southern whites had persecuted Blacks and of how they had suffered under slavery. I remember Grandfather and Grandmother Thorpe showing me the scars they had on their backs from the overseer's lash. I remember Pa reading newspaper accounts of the endless reign of lynch terror in the South, and about the 1908 riots in Springfield, Illinois.

In 1908, Jack Johnson, the first Black heavyweight champion, defeated the "great white hope," Jim Jeffries. Pa said that it was the occasion for a new round of lynchings in the South. There were other great Black fighters—Sam Langford, Joe Jeanett and Sam McVey for instance—but Johnson was the first Black heavyweight to be able to fight for the championship and the first to win it.

He was conscious that he was a Black man in a racist world. "I'm Black, they never let me forget it. I'm Black, I'll never forget it." Jeffries had been pushed as the hope of the white race to reclaim the heavyweight crown from Johnson. When Johnson knocked out Jeffries, it was a symbol of Black defiance and self-assertion. To Blacks, the victory meant pride and hope. It was a challenge to the authority of bigoted whites and to them it called for extra measures to "keep the niggers in their place."

To us children, Black repression seemed restricted to the South, outside the orbit of our immediate experience. As I saw it then, there was no deliberate plot of white against Black. I thought there were two kinds of white folk: good and bad, and the latter were mainly in the South. Most of those I knew in South Omaha were good people. Disillusionment came later in my life.

The friendly interracial atmosphere of South Omaha was illustrated by the presence of Officer Bingham and Officer Ballou, two Black cops in the town's small police force. Bingham was a big, Black and jolly fellow. His beat was our neighborhood. Ballou was a tall, slim, ramrod straight and light brown-skinned Black. He was a veteran of the Black Tenth Cavalry. He had fought in the Indian wars against Geronimo and had participated in the chase for Billy the Kid. Ballou was also a veteran of the Spanish-American War. All the kids, Black and white, regarded him with a special awe and respect. Both Black officers were treated as respectable members of the community, liked by the people because they had their confidence. While they wore guns, they never seemed to use them. These cops fought tough characters with fists and clubs, pulling a gun only rarely, and then only in self-defense. It seemed that a large part of their duty was to keep the kids out of mischief.

"Officer Bingham," the Bohemian woman across the alley would call, "would you please keep an eye on my boy Frontal. See he don't make trouble."

"Don't worry, Mrs. Brazda. He's a good boy."

"Has Haywood been a good boy?"

"Oh yes, Mrs. Hall. He's all right." And he would stop for a chat.

My sister Eppa, a lad called Willy Starens and I were the only Black kids in the Brown Park Elementary School. My brother Otto had already graduated and was in South Omaha High. Our schoolmates were predominantly Bohemians, with a sprinkling of Irish, German and a few Anglo-Americans. My close childhood chums included two Bohemian lads, Frank Brazda and Jimmy Rehau; an Anglo-Irish kid, Earl Power; and Willy Ziegler, who was of German parentage. We were an inseparable fivesome, in and out of each other's homes all the time.

During my first years in school, I was plagued by asthma, and was absent from school many months at a time. The result was that I was a year behind. I finally outgrew this infirmity and became a strong, healthy boy. By the time I reached the eighth grade, I had become one of the best students in my class, sharing this honor with a Bohemian girl, Bertha Himmel. Both of us could solve any problem in arithmetic, both were good at spelling, and at interschool spelling bees our school usually won the first prize. My self-confidence was encouraged by my teachers, all of whom were white and yet uniformly kind and sympathetic.

Of course, like all kids, I had plenty of fights. But race was seldom involved. Occasionally, I would hear the word "nigger." While it evoked anger in me, it seemed no more disparaging than the terms "bohunk," "sheeny," "dago," "shanty Irish" or "poor white trash." All were terms of common usage, interchangeable as slurring epithets on one's ethnic background, and usually employed outside the hearing of the person in question.

In contrast to the daily life of the neighborhood, however, the virus of racism was subtly injected into the classroom at the Brown Park School I attended. The five races of mankind illustrated in our geography books portrayed the Negro with the receding forehead and prognathous jaws of a gorilla. There was a complete absence of Black heroes in the history books, supporting the inference that the Black man had contributed nothing to civilization. We were taught that Blacks were brought out of the savagery of the jungles of Africa and introduced to civilization through slavery under the benevolent auspices of the white man.

In spite of my Father's submissive attitude, it is to him that I must give credit for scotching this big lie about the Negro's past. His attitude grew out of his concern for our survival in a hostile environment. He felt most strongly that the Negro was not innately inferior. He perceived that his children must have some sense of self-respect and confidence to sustain them until that distant day when, through "obvious merit and just dessert," Blacks would receive their award of equality and recognition.

Father possessed an amazing store of knowledge which he had culled from his readings. He would tell us about the Black civilizations of ancient Egypt, Ethiopia and Cush. He would quote from the *Song of Solomon:* "I am Black and comely, oh ye daughters of Jerusalem." He would tell us about Black soldiers in the Civil War; about the massacre of Blacks at Fort Pillow and the battle cry they used thereafter, "Remember Fort Pillow! Remember Fort Pillow!"[2] He knew about the Haitian Revolution, the defeat of Napoleon's Army by Toussaint L'Ouverture, Dessalines and Jean Christophe. He told us about the famous Zulu chief Shaka in South Africa; about Alexandre Dumas, the great French romanticist, and Pushkin, the great Russian poet, who were both Black.

Father said that he had taught himself to read and write. He had an extensive library, which took up half of one of the walls in our living room. His books were mainly historical works—his favorite subject. They included such titles as *The Decisive Battles of the World, The Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire,* and many histories of England, France, Germany and Russia. He had *Stanley in Africa,* and a number of biographies of famous men, including Napoleon, Caesar and Hannibal (who Father said was a Negro). He had Scott's *Ivanhoe* and his Waverly novels; Bulwer Lytton; Alexandre Dumas' novels and the *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass,* and *Up From Slavery* by Booker T. Washington.

On another wall there was a huge picture of the charge of the Twenty-fifth Black Infantry and the Tenth Cavalry at San Juan Hill, rescuing Teddy Roosevelt and the Rough Riders. There were pictures of Frederick Douglass and, of course, his hero, Booker T. Washington. He would lecture to us on history, displaying his extensive knowledge. He was a great admirer of Napoleon. He would get into one of his lecturing moods and pace up and down with his hands behind his back before the rapt audience of my sister Eppa and myself. Talking about the Battle of Waterloo, he would say:

"Wellington was in a tough spot that day. Napoleon was about to whip him; the trouble was Blucher hadn't shown up."

"Who was he, Pa?"

"He was the German general who was supposed to reinforce Wellington with 13,000 Prussian troops. Wellington was getting awful nervous, walking up and down behind the lines and saying, 'Oh! If Blucher fails to come! Where is Blucher?' "

"Did he finally get there, Pa?"

"Yes, son, he finally got there and turned the tide of battle. And if he hadn't shown up and Napoleon had won, the whole course of history would have been changed."

It was through Father that I entered the world of books. I developed an unquenchable thirst to learn about people and their history. I remember going to the town library when I was nine or ten and asking, "Do you have a history of the world for children?"

My first love became the historical novel. I loved George Henty's books; they always dealt with the exploits of a sixteen-year-old during an important historical period. Through Henty's heroes, I too was with *Bonnie Prince Charlie,* with *Wellington in the Spanish Peninsula,* with *Gustavus Adolphus at Lutsen* in the Thirty Years War, with *Clive in India* and *Under Drake's Flag* around the world. I was also fascinated by romances of the feudal period such as *When Knighthood Was in Flower* and *Ivanhoe.* I read Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* and *Tom Sawyer,* and the works of H. Rider Haggard.

I went through a definite Anglophile stage, in part due to the influence of a Jamaican named Mr. Williams who worked as assistant janitor with my Father. Mr. Williams was a huge Black man with scars all over his face. He was a former stoker in the British Navy. I was attracted by his strange accent and haughty demeanor. Evidently he saw in me an appreciative audience. I would listen with open mouth and wonder at the stories of the strange places he had seen, of his adventures in faraway lands. He was a real British patriot, a Black imperialist, if such was possible.

He would declare, "The sun never sets on the British Empire," and then sing "Rule Brittania, Brittania Rule the Waves." He quoted Napoleon as allegedly saying, "Britain is a small garden, but she grows some bitter weeds," and "Give me French soldiers and British officers, and I will conquer the world." I pictured myself as a British sailor, and read *Two Years Before the Mast* and *Battle of Trafalgar.*

"Do you think they would let me join the British Navy?" I asked Mr. Williams.

"No, my lad," he answered, "You have to be a British citizen or subject to do that." I was quite disappointed.

But it was not only British romance that fascinated me. At about the age of twelve I became a Francophile. I read all of Dumas' novels and quite a number of other novels about France. I had begun to read French history, which to me turned out to be as interesting as the novels and equally romantic. I read about Joan of Arc, the Hundred Years' War, Francis I, about Catherine de Medici, the Huguenots and Admiral Coligny, the Duc de Guise, the massacre of St. Bartholomew Eve or the night of the long knives; then the French Revolution, *A Tale of Two Cities,* the guillotining of Charlotte Corday and the assassination of Marat.

Occasionally, the ugly reality of race would intrude upon the dream world of my childhood. I distinctly remember two such occasions. One was when a white family from Arkansas moved across the alley from us. Mr. Faught, the patriarch of the clan, was a typical red-necked peckerwood. He would sit around the store front, chawing tobacco, telling how they treated "niggers" down his way.

"They were made to stay in their place—down in the cotton patch—not in factories taking white men's jobs."

As I remember, his racist harangues did not make much of an impression on the local white audience. Apparently at that time there was no feeling of competition in South Omaha because there were so few Blacks. I would also imagine that his slovenly appearance did not jibe with his white supremacist pretensions.

One day a substitute teacher took over our class. I was about ten years old. The substitute was a Southerner from Arkansas. During history class she started talking about the Civil War. The slaves, she said, did not really want freedom because they were happy as they were. They would have been freed by their masters in a few years anyway. Her villain was General Grant, whom she contrasted unfavorably with General Robert E. Lee.

"Lee was a gentleman," she put forth, "But Grant was a cigar-smoking liquor-drinking roughneck."

She didn't like Sherman either, and talked about his "murdering rampage" through Georgia. I wasn't about to take all of this and challenged her.

"I don't know about General Grant's habits, but he did beat Lee. Besides, Lee couldn't have been much of a gentleman; he owned slaves!"

Livid with rage, she shouted, "That's enough—what I could say about you!"

"Well, what could you say?" I challenged.

She apparently saw that wild racist statements wouldn't work in this situation, and that I was trying to provoke her to do something like that. She cut short the argument, shouting, "That's enough"

"Yes, that's enough," I sassed.

During the heated exchange, I felt that I had the sympathy of most of my classmates. After school, some gathered around me and said, "You certainly told her off!"

When I told Mother she supported me. "You done right, son," she said.

But Father was not so sure. "You might have gotten into trouble."

I feel now that one of the reasons for my self-confidence during my childhood years, and why the racist notions of innate Black inferiority left me cold, was my older brother Otto. His example belied such claims. He was the most brilliant one in our family, and probably in all of South Omaha. He had skipped a grade both in grade school and in high school, and was a real prodigy. He was a natural poet, and won many prizes in composition. His poem on the charge of the Twenty-fifth Black Infantry and Tenth Cavalry at San Juan Hill was published in one of the Omaha dailies. Otto was praised by all of his teachers. "An unusual boy," they said, "clearly destined to become a leader of his race."

One day, one of his teachers and a Catholic priest called on Mother and Father to talk about Otto's future. Otto was about fourteen at the time. They suggested that he might be good material for the priesthood, and that there was a possibility of his getting a scholarship for Creighton University, Omaha's famous Jesuit school. The teacher suggested that if this were agreed to, he should take up Latin. My parents were extremely flattered, despite the fact that they were good Methodists (AME). Even Father, who did not seem ambitious for his children, was impressed.

But when the proposition was placed before Otto, he vehemently disagreed. He did not want to become a priest nor did he want to study Latin. He wanted, he said, to be an architect! Doctors, dentists, teachers and preachers—these were the professions for an ambitious Black in those days.

"An architect!" they exclaimed in amazement. "Who ever heard of a Black architect?"

"Who ever heard of a Black priest?" Otto retorted. (At that time there were only two or three Black priests in the entire U.S.)

"But Otto," Mother argued,"you'll have the support of a lot of prominent white folks. They'll help you through college."

But Otto would have none of it. Undoubtedly, my parents thought that they could finally wear down his opposition and that he would become more amenable in time. They did force him to take Latin, a subject he hated.

Otto stayed in school, but no longer seemed interested in his studies. He dropped out of school suddenly in his senior year. He was sixteen. He left home and got a job as a bellhop in a hotel in North Omaha's Black community. This move cut completely the few remaining ties he had with his white age group in South Omaha.

Otto's drop-out from high school evidently signified that he had given up the struggle to be somebody in the white world. He had become disillusioned with the white world and therefore sought identity with his own people. During my childhood years, our relationship had never been close. There was, of course, the age gap—he was seven years older. But even in later years, when we were closer and had more in common, we never talked about our childhood. I don't know why. As a child I had been proud of his academic feats and boasted about them to my friends.

At the time he left high school Otto was the only Black in South Omaha High and was about to become its first Black graduate. Highly praised by his teachers and popular among his fellow students, he was a real showpiece in the school.

What caused him to drop out of school in his senior year? Thinking back on it, I don't believe that it had anything to do with the attempt to make him a priest. I think that he had won that battle a couple of years before. At least, I never heard the matter mentioned again.

Otto undoubtedly had had high aspirations at one time, as evidenced by his desire to become an architect. Somewhere along the line they disappeared. Perhaps a contributing factor was the accumulating effect of Otto's malady. On occasion, Mother would remind us that Otto had water on the brain, and that he was different from Eppa and myself. At the time, he seemed smarter than us, more independent and in rebellion against Pa's lack of encouragement, moral support and his parental authority. Certainly in adult life Otto used to sleep about ten hours a day and very often fell asleep in meetings. He seemed to lack the ability of prolonged concentration, although whatever brain damage he may have suffered never affected the quickness of his mind and ability to grasp the nub of any question or the capacity for leadership which he showed on a number of occasions.

But more debilitating, probably, than any physical disease was the generation gap of that era—between parents of slave backgrounds and children born free, particularly in the north. Otto's dropping out of school and his later radical political development were undoubtedly related to a conflict more intense than the ones of today.

Father was an ardent follower of Booker T. Washington. His ambitions for his sons were very modest, to put it mildly. He undoubtedly would have been satisfied if we could become good law-abiding citizens with stable jobs. He thought of jobs a notch or two above his own station, like a postal employee, a skilled tradesman, or a clerk in the civil service. The offer of a scholarship for the priesthood was, therefore, simply beyond his expectations, and I guess that the old man was deeply disappointed at Otto's rejection of it.

Otto was quite independent and would not conform to Father's idea of discipline. For example, he was completely turned off on the question of religion, and Father could not force him to go to church. I don't remember Otto ever going to church with the family. Father claimed that Otto was irresponsible and wild. As a result, there was mutual hostility between them. The results were numerous thrashings when Otto was young and violent quarrels between them as he grew older. Mother would usually defend Otto. Grandpa Thorpe, himself a strict disciplinarian, would warn Mother: "Hattie, you mark my words, that boy is going to lan' in the pen."

At some point, Otto came to the conclusion that there was no use in continuing his education. He must have felt that it was irrelevant. Opportunities for educated Blacks were few, even in North Omaha's Black community where there were only a few professionals. In that community there were a few preachers, one doctor, one dentist and one or two teachers. Black businesses consisted of owners of several undertaking establishments, a couple of barber shops and a few pool rooms. The only other Blacks in any sort of middle class positions were a few postal employees, civil service workers, pullman porters and waiters.

Then too, Otto had passed through the age of puberty and was becoming more and more conscious of his race. Along with the natural detachment and withdrawal from childhood socializing with girls—in his case white girls who were former childhood sweethearts—Otto experienced a withdrawal and non-socialization because of his race. He ended up quite alone because there were not many Black kids his age in South Omaha. There wasn't much contact with the Black kids from North Omaha either. As a very sensitive person on the verge of manhood, I imagine he began to feel these changes keenly.

After he dropped out of school in 1908, Otto was soon attracted to the "sportin' life"—the pool halls and sporting houses of North Omaha. He wanted to be among Black people; he was anxious to get away from Father. Thus, he left home and got jobs as a bellhop, shoeshine boy, and busboy. He began to absorb a new way of life, stepping fully into the social life of the Black community in North Omaha. He'd evidently heeded the "call of the blood" and gone back to the race. It was not until a few years later, when I had similar experiences, that I understood that Otto had arrived at the first stage in his identity crisis and had gone to where he felt he belonged.

He would come home quite often, though, flaunting his new clothes, a "box-backed" suit—"fitting nowhere but the shoulders," high-heeled Stacey Adams button shoes, and a stetson hat. He'd give a few dollars to Mother and some dimes to me and my sister. Sometimes he would bring a pretty girl friend with him. But most of the time, he would bring a young man, Henry Starens, who was a piano player. He played a style popular in those days, later to be known as boogie-woogie, in which the piano was the whole orchestra. He played Ma Rainey's famous blues, "Make Me a Pallet on Your Floor, Make It Where Your Man Will Never Know," and the old favorite, "Alabama Bound."

Alabama Bound
I'm Alabama Bound.
Oh, babe, don't leave me here,
Just leave a dime for beer.

A boy of ten at the time, I was tremendously impressed. There is no doubt that Otto's experience served to weaken some of my childish notions about making it in the white world.

HALLEY'S COMET AND MY RELIGION

On May 4, 1910, Halley's Comet appeared flaring down out of the heavens, its luminous tail switching to earth. It was an ominous sight.

A rash of religious revival swept Omaha. Prophets and messiahs appeared on street corners and in churches preaching the end of the world. Hardened sinners "got religion." Backsliders renewed their faith. The comet, with its tail moving ever closer to the earth, seemed to lend credence to forecasts of imminent cosmic disaster.

Both my Mother and Father were deeply religious. Theirs was that "old time religion," the fire-and-brimstone kind which leaned heavily on the Old Testament. It was the kind that accepted the Bible and all its legends as the literal gospel truth. We children had the "fear of the Lord" drilled into us from early age. My image of God was that of a vengeful old man who demanded unquestioned faith, strict obedience and repentant love as the price of salvation:

> I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me, and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

Every Sunday, rain or shine, the family would attend services at the little frame church near the railroad tracks. For me, this was a tortuous ordeal. I looked forward to Sundays with dread. We would spend all of eight hours in church. We would sit through the morning service, then the Sunday school, after which followed a break for dinner. We returned at five for the Young People's Christian Endeavor and finally the evening service. It was not just boredom. Fear was the dominant emotion, especially when our preacher, Reverend Jamieson, a big Black man with a beautiful voice, would launch into one of his fire-and-brimstone sermons. He would start out slowly and in a low voice, gradually raising it higher he would swing to a kind of sing-song rhythm, holding his congregation rapt with vivid word pictures. They would respond with "Hallelujah! " "Ain't it the truth! " "Preach it, brother!"

He would go on in this manner for what seemed an interminable time, and would reach his peroration on a high note, winding up with a rafter-shaking burst of oratory. He would then pause dramatically amidst moans, shouts and even screams of some of the women, one or two of whom would fall out in a dead faint. Waiting for them to subside he would then, in a lowered, scarcely audible voice, reassure his flock that it was not yet too late to repent and achieve salvation. All that was necessary was to: "Repent sinners, and love and obey the Lord. Amen." Someone would then rise and lead off with an appropriate spiritual such as:

Oh, my sins are forgiven and my soul set free-ah,
Oh, glory Halelua-a-a-a!
Just let me in the kingdom when the world is all a'fi-ah,
Oh Glory Halelu!
I don't feel worried, no ways tiahd,
Oh, glory Halelu!

I remember the family Bible, a huge book which lay on the center table in the front room. The first several pages were blank, set aside for recording the vital family statistics: births, deaths, marriages. The book was filled with graphic illustrations of biblical happenings. Leafing through Genesis (which we used to call "the begats"), one came to Exodus and from there on a pageant of bloodshed and violence unfolded. Portrayed in striking colors were the interminable tribal wars in which the Israelites slew the Mennonites and Pharoah's soldiers killed little children in search of Moses. There was the great God, Jehovah himself, whitebearded and eyes flashing, looking very much like our old cracker neighbor, Mr. Faught.

Just a couple of weeks before Halley's comet appeared, Mother had taken us to see the silent film, *Dante's Inferno*, through which I sat with open mouth horror. Needless to say, this experience did not lessen my apprehension.

The comet continued its descent, its tail like the flaming sword of vengeance. Collision seemed not just possible, but almost certain. What had we poor mortals done to incur such wrath of the Lord?

My deportment underwent a change. I did all my chores without complaint and helped Mama around the house. This was so unlike me that she didn't know what to make of it. I overheard her telling Pa about my good behavior and how helpful I had become lately. But I hadn't really changed. I was just scared. I was simply trying to carry out another one of God's commandments, "Honor thy father and thy mother that thy days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with thee in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee."

Then one night, when the whole neighborhood had gathered as usual on the hill to watch the comet, it appeared to have ceased its movement towards the earth. We were not sure, but the next night we were certain. It had not only ceased its descent, but was definitely withdrawing. In a couple more nights, it had disappeared. A wave of relief swept over the town.

"It's not true!" I thought to myself. "The fire and brimstone, the leering devils, the angry vengeful God. None of it is true."

It was as if a great weight had been lifted from my mind. It was the end of my religion, although I still thought that there was most likely a supreme being. But if God existed, he was nothing like the God portrayed in our family Bible. I was no longer terrified of him. Later, at the age of fourteen or fifteen, I read some of the lectures of Robert G. Ingersoll and became an agnostic, doubting the existence of a god. From there, I later moved to positive atheism.

Two years later, the great event was the sinking of the *Titanic*.

This was significant in Omaha because one of the Brandeis brothers, owners of the biggest department store in North Omaha, went down with her. In keeping with the custom of Blacks to gloat over the misfortunes of whites, especially rich ones, some Black bard composed the "Titanic Blues":

When old John Jacob Astor left his home,
He never thought he was going to die.
Titanic fare thee well,
I say fare thee well.

But disaster was more frequently reserved for the Black community. On Easter Sunday 1913, a tornado struck North Omaha. It ripped a two-block swath through the Black neighborhood, leaving death and destruction in its wake. Among the victims were a dozen or so Black youths trapped in a basement below a pool hall where they had evidently been shooting craps. Mother did not fail to point out the incident as another example of God's wrath. While I was sorry for the youths and their families (some of them were friends of Otto), the implied warning left me cold. My God-fearing days had ended with Halley's Comet.

Misfortune, however, was soon to strike our immediate family. It happened that summer, in 1913. My Father fled town after being attacked and beaten by a gang of whites on Q Street, right outside the gate of the packing plant. They told him to get out of town or they would kill him.

I remember vividly the scene that night when Father staggered through the door. Consternation gripped us at the sight. His face was swollen and bleeding, his clothes torn and in disarray. He had a frightened, hunted look in his eyes. My sister Eppa and I were alone. Mother had gone for the summer to work for her employers, rich white folks, at Lake Okoboji, Iowa.

"What happened?" we asked.

He gasped out the story of how he had been attacked and beaten.

"They said they were going to kill me if I didn't get out of town."

We asked him who "they" were. He said that he recognized some of them as belonging to the Irish gang on Indian Hill, but there were also some grown men.

"But why, Pa? Why should they pick on you?"

"Why don't we call the police?"

"That ain't goin' to do no good. We just have to leave town."

"But Pa," I said, "how can we? We own this house. We've got friends here. If you tell them, they wouldn't let anybody harm us."

Again the frightened look crossed his face.

"No, we got to go."

"Where, where will we go?"

"We'll move up to Minneapolis, your uncles Watt and George are there. I'll get work there. I'm going to telegraph your Mother to come home now."

He washed his face and then went into the bedroom and began packing his bags. The next morning he gave Eppa some money and said, "This will tide you over till your Mother comes. She'll be here in a day or two. I'm going to telegraph her as soon as I get to the depot. I'll send for you all soon."

He kissed us goodbye and left.

Only when he closed the door behind him did we feel the full impact of the shock. It had happened so suddenly. Our whole world had collapsed. Home and security were gone. The feeling of safety in our little haven of interracial goodwill had proved elusive. Now we were just homeless "niggers" on the run.

The cruelest blow, perhaps, was the shattering of my image of Father. True enough, I had not regarded him as a hero. Still, however, I had retained a great deal of respect for him. He was undoubtedly a very complex man, very sensitive and imaginative. Probably he had never gotten over the horror of that scene in the cabin near Martin, Tennessee, where as a boy of fifteen he had seen his father kill the Klansman. He distrusted and feared poor whites, especially the native born and, in Omaha, the shanty Irish.

Mother arrived the next day. For her it was a real tragedy. Our home was gone and our family broken up. She had lived in Omaha for nearly a quarter of a century. She had raised her family there and had built up a circle of close friends. With her regular summer job at Lake Okoboji and catering parties the rest of the year, she had helped pay for our home. Now it was gone. We would be lucky if we even got a fraction of the money we had put into it, not to speak of the labor. Now she was to leave all this. Friends and neighbors would ask why Father had run away.

Why had he let some poor white trash run him out of town? He had friends there. Ours was an old respected family. He also had influential white patrons. There was Ed Cudahy of the family that owned the packing plant where he worked. The Cudahys had become one of the nation's big three in the slaughtering and meat packing industry. Father had known him from boyhood. There was Mr. Wilkins, general manager at Cudahy's, whom Father had known as an office boy, and who now gave Father all his old clothes.

A few days later, Mr. Cannon, a railroad man in charge of a buffet car on the Omaha and Minneapolis run and an old friend of the family, called with a message from Father. He said that Father was all right, that he had gotten a job for himself and Mother at the Minneapolis Women's Club. Father was to become caretaker and janitor, Mother was to cater the smaller parties at the club and to assist at the larger affairs. They were to live on the place in a basement apartment.

The salary was ridiculously small (I think about $60 per month for both of them) and the employers insisted that only one of us children would be allowed to live at the place. That, of course, would be Eppa. He said that Father had arranged for me to live with another family. This, he said, would be a temporary arrangement. He was sure he could find another job, and rent a house where we could all be together again. As for me, Father suggested that since I was fifteen, I could find a part-time job to help out while continuing school. Mr. Cannon said that he was to take me back to Minneapolis with him, and that Mother and Eppa were to follow in a few days.

With regards to our house, Mr. Cannon said that he knew a lawyer, an honest fellow, who for a small commission would handle its sale. Mother later claimed that after deducting the lawyer's commission and paying off a small mortgage, they only got the paltry sum of $300! This was for a five-room house with electricity and running water.

The next day, Mr. Cannon took me out to his buffet car in the railroad yards. He put me in the pantry and told me to stay there, and if the conductor looked in: "Don't be afraid, he's a friend of mine." Our car was then attached to a train which backed down to the station to load passengers. I looked out the window as we left Omaha. I was not to see Omaha again until after World War I, when I was a waiter on the Burlington Railroad.

My childhood and part of my adolescence was now behind me. I felt that I was practically on my own. What did the world hold for me—a Black youth?

Arriving in Minneapolis, I went to my new school. As I entered the room, the all-white class was singing old darkie plantation songs. Upon seeing me, their voices seemed to take on a mocking, derisive tone. Loudly emphasizing the Negro dialect and staring directly at me, they sang:

> *"Down in De Caun fiel—HEAH DEM darkies moan*
> *All De darkies AM a weeping*
> *MASSAHS in DE Cold Cold Ground"*

They were really having a ball.

In my state of increased racial awareness, this was just too much for me. I was already in a mood of deep depression. With the breakup of our family, the separation from my childhood friends, and the interminable quarrels between my Mother and Father (in which I sided with Mother), I was in no mood to be kidded or scoffed at.

That was my last day in school. I never returned. I made up my mind to drop out and get a full-time job.

I was fifteen and in the second semester of the eighth grade.

Chapter 2

A Black Regiment in World War I

> On the Negroes this double experience of deliberate and devilish persecution from their own countrymen, coupled with a taste of real democracy and world-old culture, was revolutionizing. They began to hate prejudice and discrimination as they had never hated it before. They began to realize its eternal meaning and complications...they were filled with a bitter, dogged determination never to give up the fight for Negro equality in America....A new, radical Negro spirit has been born in France, which leaves us older radicals far behind. Thousands of young Black men have offered their lives for the Lilies of France and they return ready to offer them again for the Sunflowers of Afro-America.
>
> W.E.B. DuBois, June 1919[1]

Despite my bitter encounter with racism in school, I liked Minneapolis. I was impressed by the beauty of this city with its many lakes and surrounding pine forests. The racial climate in 1913 was not as bad as my early experience in school would indicate, either. Blacks seemed to get along well, especially with the Scandinavian nationalities, who constituted the most numerous ethnic grouping in the city.

Upon quitting school, I became a part of the small Black community and completely identified with it. I found friends among Black boys and girls of my age group, attended parties, dances, picnics at Lake Minnetonka, and ice skated in the winter time. Here, as in Omaha, a ghetto had not yet fully formed, though there were the beginnings of one in the Black community on the north side.

Included in the Black community and among my new friends were a relatively large number of mulattos, the progeny of mixed marriages between Scandinavian women and Black men. This phenomenon dated back to the turn of the century. At that time it was the fashion among wealthy white families to import Scandinavian maids. Many of these families had Black male servants—butlers, chauffeurs, etc.—and the small Black population was preponderantly male. The result was a rash of inter-marriages between the Scandinavian maids and the Black male house servants. The interracial couples formed a society called Manasseh which held well-known yearly balls.[2] As a whole the children of this group were a hot-headed lot and seemed even more racially conscious than the rest of us.

It was in Minneapolis that I too reached a heightened stage of racial awareness. This was hastened, no doubt, by the tragic events in South Omaha and the fact that I was now an adolescent and there was the problem of girls. I had noticed that it was in the period of pubescence that a Black boy, raised even in communities of relative racial tolerance, was first confronted with the problem of race. It had been so with my brother Otto in Omaha, and now it was so with me.

During the first year after dropping out of school I worked as a bootblack, barber shop porter, bell hop and busboy, continuing in the last long enough to acquire the rudiments of the waiter's trade. At the age of sixteen, I got a job as dining car waiter on the Chicago Northwestern Railway. The first run was also my first trip to the big city, where I had four aunts (my Mother's sisters). All through my childhood my Mother had told stories about her first visit there at the time of the Chicago Exposition. Upon arrival, one of the older waiters on the car, Lon Holliday, took me to see the town. I'm sure he looked forward to showing a young "innocent" the ropes. After a visit to my aunts, he took me to a notorious dive on the Southside. It was the back room of a saloon at Thirty-second and State Street.

The piano man was playing "boogie woogie" style, popular in those days. The few couples on the floor were "walking the dog," "balling the jack," and so on. Then one of the dancers, a woman, called to the pianist, "Oh, Mr. Johnson, please play 'Those Dirty Motherfuckers.' " He enthusiastically complied and sang a number of verses of the bawdy tune. I almost sank through the floor in embarassment and even amazement. Lon, who was watching, burst out laughing and he said, "Boy, you ain't seen nothing yet!"

He then took me to the famous "Mecca Flats" on Federal Street, where a rent party was in process. There he introduced me to a young woman, whom he evidently knew, and slipped her some money, saying, "Take care of my young friend here; be sure you get him back on the car in the morning. We leave for Minneapolis at 10:00 A.M."

The railroads were a way to see the country and in the months that followed I took advantage of that, working for different lines, on different runs as far west as Seattle. On one run in Montana called the Loop, the dining car shuttled between Great Falls and Butte by way of Helena, stopping at each town overnight. It was known as the "outlaw run" and I soon found out why. It attracted a number of characters wanted by police in other cities, searching for an escape or a temporary hideout.

While laying over in Butte one night, our chef murdered the parlor car porter—cut his throat while he was sleeping in the parlor car. They had been feuding for days. I went through the parlor car that morning and was the first to see the ghastly sight. The police came, but the chef had disappeared. My enthusiasm for the job was gone. It might have been me, I thought, for I had had a number of arguments with the chef about my orders.

I quit and headed back to Minneapolis, arriving there shortly after war broke out in Europe in 1914. I was sixteen and had been avidly following the news, reading of the invasions of Belgium, France, the Battle of the Marne, etc.

One day, walking along Hennepin Avenue I saw a Canadian recruiting sergeant. He was wearing the uniform of the Princess Pat Regiment, bright red jacket and black kilt. A handsome fellow, I thought, looking like Bonnie Prince Charlie himself. He noticed me looking at him and asked, "You want to join up with the Princess Pat, my lad? We've got a number of Black boys like you in the regiment. You'll find you're treated like anyone else up there. We make no difference between Black and white in Canada."

Imagining myself in the red jacket and black kilt, I said, "Sure, I'll join."

Then looking at me closely, he asked, "How old are you?"

"Eighteen," I lied.

"Your parents living?"

"Yes."

"Well, you've got to get their consent."

"Oh, they'll agree," I said.

"They live in the city?"

"Yes."

"Well, you come back here tomorrow and bring one of them with you and I'll sign you up."

"Okay," I said, but I knew that my parents would never agree. And well it was, too, for I later learned that this regiment was among the first victims of the German mustard gas attack at Ypres, and what was left of them was practically wiped out at bloody Paschendale on the Sommes front.

Life in Minneapolis was beginning to bore me. I was anxious to get back to Chicago, "the big city," so I moved there and stayed with my Aunt Lucy at Forty-third and State. In 1915 my parents, at the urging of my Mother, also moved to Chicago, and I then stayed with them.

In Chicago I got a job as a busboy at the Tip Top Inn, then considered the finest restaurant in town. It was owned by old man Hieronymous, a famous chef, and was noted for its French cuisine and service. In the trade it was taken for granted that if you had been a waiter at the Tip Top Inn you could work anywhere in the country. After a few months I was promoted to waiter and felt that I had perfected my skills. During the next three years I worked at a number of places: the Twentieth Century Limited, the New York Central's crack train; the Wolverine (Michigan Central);

the Sherman House; the old Palmer House; and the Auditorium.

During this time in Chicago I saw Casey Jones, a Black man and a legendary character known to at least four generations of Black Chicagoans. As I remember, he was partially paralyzed, probably from cerebral palsy. He would go through the streets with trained chickens, which he put through various capers, shouting, "Crabs, crabs, I got them!" He had a defect in his speech which he exploited. The audience would literally fall out at his rendering of the popular sentimental ballad, "The Curse of an Aching Heart":

You made me what I am today,
I hope you're satisfied.
You dragged and dragged me down until
The heart within me died.
Although you're not true,
May God bless you,
That's the curse of an aching heart!

Then there was the beloved comedian, String Beans, who often appeared at the old Peking Theater at Thirty-first and State Street. The Dolly Sisters also appeared there; they were very famous at the time. Teenan Jones's lush night spot was at Thirty-fifth and State Street. Then at the Panama, another night club, I would listen to Mamie Smith sing "Shimmy-sha-Wobble, That's All," a very popular song and dance at the time.

Once, when I wanted to go back to Minneapolis to visit, I caught the Pioneer Limited—riding the rods—out of the station on the west side. This was my first experience in hoboing. I rode the rods as far as Beloit, Wisconsin.

At Beloit I got off, but was afraid to get back on because a yard dick was going around the cars. I stayed there overnight—a fairly cold night as I remember. I met a white man, a "professional" hobo, who took me in tow and told me about the trains leaving in the morning. He said we could catch a train that would pull us right into Minneapolis. It was a passenger train, and we could "ride the blinds in," that is, the space between the two Pullman cars.

We rode the blinds, reaching La Crosse, Wisconsin. On the way he warned, "You know, there's a bad dick up there in La Crosse. We gotta watch out for him." When the train pulled to a stop in La Crosse both of us hopped off. Other guys were flying out of the train from all sides—from the rods, the blinds, and there were some on top, too. But this notorious yard dick caught us. He was a rough character, and let us know it as he lined us up.

"Hey, up there!"

I was at the end of the line of about a dozen guys and was the only Black there. I had my hands in my pocket.

"Take yer hands outta yer pockets!"

I took my hands out of my pockets.

The engine's fireman was looking out, watching all of this. He called to the yard dick, "Say, Jim, let me have that young colored boy over there to slide down coal for me into Minneapolis."

The dick looked at me and scowled, "All right, you, get up there!"

He shouted to the fireman, "But see that he works!"

"I'll see to that; he'll work."

I scrambled on the engine tender and slid coal all the way to Minneapolis, where I got off at the station.

Among my new friends in Chicago were several members of the Eighth Illinois, Black National Guard Regiment. They would regale me with tall stories of their exploits on the Mexican border in the summer of 1916 when the regiment took part in a "show of force" against the Mexican Revolution. None of us, of course, knew the real issues involved.

I remember reading of the exploits of the famous Black Tenth Cavalry Regiment, which was a part of the force sent by General Funston across the border in pursuit of Pancho Villa. They had been ambushed by Villa and a number of them killed. The papers, on that occasion, had been full of accounts of the heroic Black cavalrymen and their valiant white officers. The Eighth, however, had been in the rear near San Antonio, Texas, and saw no action during the abortive campaign.

Intrigued by their experiences, I joined the Eighth Regiment in the winter of 1917. I was nineteen. The regiment, officered by Blacks from the colonel on down (many of them veterans of the four Black Regular Army regiments), gave me a feeling of pride. They had a high esprit de corps which emphasized racial solidarity. I didn't regard it just as a part of a U.S. Army unit, but as some sort of a big social club of fellow race-men. Still, I knew that we would eventually get into the war. That did not bother me; on the contrary, romance, adventure, travel beckoned. I saw possible escape from the inequities and oppression which was the lot of Blacks in the U.S. I was already a Francophile. I had read and heard about the fairness of the French with respect to the race issue. It seems now, as I look back upon it, that patriotism was the least of my motives. I was avidly following all the news of the war and it seemed certain that the U.S. was going to get involved, despite protestations of President Wilson to the contrary.

Already the press was whipping up war sentiment. Tin Pan Alley joined in with a rash of jingoistic songs: "Don't Bite the Hand That's Feeding You," "Let's All Be American Now," ad nauseum. All this left us cold. However, the song that brought tears to my eyes was "Joan of Arc":

Joan of Arc, Joan of Arc,
Do your eyes from the skies see the foe?
Can't you see the drooping Fleur de Lys,
Can't you hear the tears of Normandy?
Joan of Arc, Joan of Arc,
Let your spirit guide us through.
Awake old France to victory!
Joan of Arc, we're calling you.

Truly, nothing was sacred to Tin Pan Alley!

The *Lusitania* was sunk; the U.S. declared war in April 1917. Our regiment was federalized on July 25, 1917, and in the late summer we were on our way to basic training at Camp Logan, near Houston, Texas.

A demagogic promise was widely circulated that things would be better if Blacks fought loyally. For example, there was the statement of President Wilson: "Out of this conflict you must expect nothing less than the enjoyment of full citizenship rights."[3] This propaganda was immediately belied by the mounting wave of new lynchings in the South, which claimed thirty-eight victims in 1917 and fifty-eight in 1918. Worst of all was the East St. Louis riot in September 1917; at least forty Blacks were massacred in a bloody pogrom that lasted several days.[4]

Then there was the mutiny-riot of the Twenty-fourth Infantry in Houston, Texas, where our regiment was to receive its basic training. Company G of our outfit was already in Houston at the time, having been sent on as an advance detachment to prepare the camp for our occupation. It was through them that I learned exactly what had happened.

Black soldiers of the Twenty-fourth Infantry, an old Regular Army regiment, had for months been subjected to insults and abuse by Houston police and civilians. The outfit had stationed its military police in Houston, who were, in theory, supposed to cooperate with local police in maintaining law and order among soldiers on leave. Instead, the Black military police found themselves the object of abuse, insults and beatings by local police. This treatment of Black MPs by racist cops was evidently encouraged by the fact that they (the Blacks) were unarmed.

A report of the special on-the-spot investigator for the NAACP published in the *Crisis*, its organ, reads:

> In deference to the southern feeling against the arming of Negroes and because of the expected cooperation of the City Police Department, members of the provost guard were not armed, thus creating a situation without precedent in the history of this guard. A few carried clubs, but none of them had guns, and most of them were without weapons of any kind. They were supposed to call on white police officers to make arrests. The feeling is strong among the colored people of Houston that this was the real cause of the riot.
>
> On the afternoon of August 23, two policemen, Lee Sparks and Rufe Daniels—the former known to the colored people as a brutal bully—entered the house of a respectable colored

> woman in an alleged search for a colored fugitive accused of crap-shooting. Failing to find him, they arrested the woman, striking and cursing her and forcing her out into the street only partly clad. While they were waiting for the patrol wagon a crowd gathered about the weeping woman who had become hysterical and was begging to know why she was being arrested.
>
> In this crowd was a colored soldier, Private Edwards. Edwards seems to have questioned the police officers or remonstrated with them. Accounts differ on this point, but they all agree that the officers immediately set upon him and beat him to the ground with the butts of their six-shooters, continuing to beat and kick him while he was on the ground, and arrested him. In the words of Sparks himself: "I beat that nigger until his heart got right. He was a good nigger when I got through with him."
>
> Later Corporal Baltimore, a member of the military police, approached the officers and inquired for Edwards, as it was his duty to do. Sparks immediately opened fire and Baltimore, being unarmed, fled....They followed...beat him up, and arrested him. It was this outrage which infuriated the men of the Twenty-fourth Infantry to the point of revolt.[5]

When word of this outrage reached the camp, feeling ran high. It was by no means the first incident of the kind that had occurred."

The white officers, feeling that the men would seek revenge, ordered them disarmed. The arms were stacked in a tent guarded by a sergeant. A group of men killed the sergeant, seized their rifles, and under the leadership of Sergeant Vida Henry, an eighteen-year veteran, marched on Houston in company strength.

When the soldiers left camp their slogan was "On to the Police Station!" They entered town by way of San Felipe Street which ran through the heart of the Black community. The fact that they took this route and avoided the more direct one which lead through a white neighborhood disproved the charge by local newspapers and the police that they were out to shoot up the town and kill all whites. Their target was clearly the Houston cops. On the way to the station they shot every person who looked like a cop.

Finally meeting resistance, a battle ensued which ended with seventeen whites, thirteen of them policemen, killed. The alarm went out and a whole division of white troops, which was stationed in the camp, was sent in to round up the mutineers. Finally cornered, the men threw down their arms and surrendered, with the exception of Sergeant Vida Henry, who committed suicide rather than be taken.

The whole battalion of the Twenty-fourth Infantry, including the mutineers, was hurriedly placed aboard a guarded troop train and sent to Fort Huachuca, Arizona. Immediately upon arrival there, those involved were given a drum-head court martial. Thirteen were executed and forty-one others were sentenced to life imprisonment.[6]

The bodies of all the executed men were sent home to their families for burial. I remember reading of the funeral of Corporal Baltimore in some little town in Illinois.

Our regiment entrained for Camp Logan with our ardor considerably dampened by these events. Indeed, we left Chicago in an angry and apprehensive mood which lasted all the way to Texas. We passed through East St. Louis in the middle of the night. Those of us who were awake were brooding about the massacre of our kinsmen which had recently taken place there. The regiment traveled in three sections, a battalion each, in old style tourist cars (sort of second-class Pullmans).

The next morning we arrived in Jonesboro, Arkansas, our first stop on the other side of the Mason-Dixon line. We were in enemy territory. For many of us it was our first time in the South. Jonesboro was a division point—all three sections of the train pulled up on sidings while the engines were being changed and the cars serviced.

It was a bright, warm and sunny Sunday morning. It seemed like the whole town had turned out at the station platform to see the strange sight of armed Black soldiers. Whites were on one side of the station platform and Blacks on the other. We pulled into the station with the windows open and our 1903 Springfield rifles on the tables in plain view of the crowd.

We were at our provocative best. We threw kisses at the white girls on the station platform, calling out to them: "Come over here, baby, give me a kiss!" "Look at that pretty redhead over there, ain't she a beaut!" And so forth.

A passenger train pulled up beside us on the next track. There, peering out the open window, was a real stereotype of an Arkansas red-neck. The sight of him was provocation enough for Willie Morgan, a huge Black in our company who was originally from Mississippi. Morgan was sitting directly across from the white man. He undoubtedly retained bitter memories of insults and persecutions from the past and quickly took advantage of what was perhaps his first opportunity to bait a cracker in his own habitat.

He reached a big ham-like hand through the window, grabbed the fellow's face and shouted, "What the hell you staring at, you peckerwood motherfucker?" The man pulled back, his hat flew off. Bending down, he recovered it and then moved quickly to the other side of his car, a frightened and puzzled look on his face. Our whole car let out a big roar.

Then a yard man, walking along the side of the car, asked, "Where are you boys going?"

"Goin' to see your momma, you cracker son-of-a-bitch!" came the reply.

The startled man looked up in amazement.

All of us were hungry. We had been given only a couple of apples for breakfast and now noticed that there were a number of shops and stores in the streets behind the station. I believe our first thought was to buy some food. The vestibule guards would not allow us to take our rifles off the cars, so we left them on our seats and proceeded to the stores in groups. As the stores became crowded, and as the storekeepers were busy serving some of our group, others started to snatch up any article in sight.

Cases of Coca-Cola, ginger ale and near-beer went back to the cars. The path to the train was strewn with loot dropped by some of the fellows. In the stores, some bought as others stole—this spontaneously evolved pattern was employed in raids on all stores in Jonesboro and at other train stops along the road to Houston.

The only serious confrontation that took place that day involved the group I was with. We crowded into a little store and a fellow named Jeffries, one of my squad buddies, approached the storekeeper who was standing behind the counter. Putting his money down, he demanded a coke. Whereupon the guy said, "I'll serve you one, but y'all can't drink it in heah."

"Why?" Jeffries asked, innocently.

"Cause we don't serve niggahs heah."

Just as we were about to jump him and wreck the place, Jeffries, a comedian, decided to play it straight. He turned to us and said, "Now wait, fellahs, let me handle this. What the man is saying is that you don't know your place."

Turning to the storekeeper he put his money down and with feigned meekness said, "All right, mister, give me a coke. I know my place, I'll drink it outside."

"Thank goodness this nigger's got some sense," the storekeeper must have thought as he placed a coke on the counter. Jeffries snatched up the bottle and immediately hit him on the head, knocking him out cold.

We then proceeded to wreck the place. We took everything in sight. Rushing back to the train, I heard a loud crash—a plate glass window someone had smashed as a parting gift to the niggerhating storekeeper.

Up to this time we had not seen any of our officers. They had been up front in the first-class Pullmans. Many of them, we suspected, were sleeping off the after effects of the parties held on the eve of our departure. Major Hunt and Captain Hill now appeared and gave orders to the non-coms and the vestibule guards to allow no one else to leave the train.

We waved goodbye to the Blacks on the station platform. They looked frightened, sad and cowed. We were leaving, but they had to stay and face the wrath of the local crackers.

The train headed to Texarkana, where the scene was repeated though on a smaller scale. In Texarkana the train stopped only a few minutes and we raided one store near the railroad station. I was the last one out, running to the train with a box of pilfered Havana cigars in my hand. Nearing the train, I passed a couple of local whites talking about the raid. One said to the other, "You see all those niggers taking that man's stuff?"

"Yeah, I see it."

"Well, what are we going to do about it?"

I reached the train just as it was pulling out, relieved not to have been left behind to find out the answer.

The next stop was Tyler, deep in the heart of Texas, scene of our most serious confrontation. Here we confronted the law in the person of the county sheriff. Tyler seemed to be a larger town than the others. It was a division point and all three sections pulled up on the sidings. As in Jonesboro, a large crowd had gathered at the station; Blacks on one side, whites on the other. Again, with our guns in view, we started flirting with the white women, throwing kisses at them and so on.

We were very hungry. There had been some foul-up in logistics so there wasn't any food on the train. All we had that day was a couple of sandwiches and some coffee. We piled off the train and headed for the stores, elbowing whites out of the way. We didn't carry our guns but many of us wore sheathed bayonets.

Major Hunt finally appeared but he was only able to stop a few of us. By that time most of us were already ransacking the stores in the immediate vicinity of the station. The path back to the station was strewn with bottles of soft drinks, hams, fruits, wrappers from the candy and cigarettes, etc. The major was frantically blowing his whistle and calling the fellows to come back to the cars. Finally we all got back and were eating our pilfered food, drinking our near-beer and soda.

Suddenly a large white man stepped forward out of the crowd. He wore a khaki uniform, a Sam Brown belt and a Colt forty-five in his holster. He approached Major Hunt and identified himself as the sheriff. (Or he might have been chief of police.) He said he intended to search the train and recover the stolen goods.

The major, a short, heavy-set Black man, said: "No, you don't. This is a military train. Any searching to be done will be done by our officers."

"I know," he said, "I want to accompany you."

"No you don't. You won't set foot on this train."

The sheriff hesitated and looked around at the crowd of white and Black. It was clearly a bitter pill for him to swallow, having for the first time in his life to take low to a Black man in front of his white constituents, as well as setting a bad example for the Blacks. He pushed the unarmed major aside and walked forward.

"Come on you peckerwood son-of-a-bitch!" we hollered from the car.

He approached the vestibule of our car where Jimmy Bland, a mean, grey-eyed and light-skinned Black was on guard.

"Back! Get back or I'll blow you apart!" Jimmy pushed the sheriff in the belly with the barrel of his rifle. To further impress upon him that the gun was loaded, he threw the bolt and ejected a bullet. The sheriff, who had doubled over from the blow, straightened up, his face ghastly white. He gasped out something to the effect that he was going to report this affair to the government and walked away. We all let out a tremendous roar.

We arrived in Houston the next day, five days after the mutiny of the Twenty-fourth. We were informed that five dollars would be docked from each man's pay to cover the damage incurred on the trip down. I believe we all felt that it was a small price to pay for the lift in morale that resulted from our forays on the trip.

We were greeted by our comrades from Company G of our battalion on arriving at Camp Logan. They had been there at the time of the mutiny-riot and gave us a detailed account of what had happened. We expected to be confronted by the hostile white population, but to our surprise, the confrontation with the Twenty-fourth seemed to have bettered the racial climate of this typical Southern town. Houston in those days was a small city of perhaps 100,000 people, not the metropolis it has now become. The whites, especially the police, had learned that they couldn't treat all Black people as they had been used to treating the local Blacks.

I can't remember a single clash between soldiers and police during our six-month stay in the area. On the contrary, if there were any incidents involving our men, the local cops would immediately call in the military police. There was also a notable improvement in the morale of the local Black population, who were quick to notice the change in attitude of the Houston cops. The cops had obviously learned to fear retaliation by Black soldiers if they committed any acts of brutality and intimidation in the Black community.

Houston Blacks were no longer the cowed, intimidated people they had been before the mutiny. They were proud of us and it was clear that our presence made them feel better. A warm and friendly relationship developed between our men and the Black community. The girls were especially proud of us. Local Blacks would point out places where some notorious, nigger-hating cop had been killed.

"See those bullet holes in the telephone pole over there," they'd say. "That's where that bad cop, old Pat Grayson, got his."

"Those Twenty-fourths certainly were sharpshooters!"

I occasionally took my laundry to an elderly woman who had known Corporal Baltimore. She told me what a nice young man he was.

"I hear he was hanged," she said.

"That's right," I replied.

Tears came to her eyes and she cluck-clucked. "He left some of his laundry here; you're about his size, you want it?"

"Yes, I'll take it."

She handed me several pairs of khaki trousers and some underwear and shirts all washed and starched and insisted that I pay only the cost of the laundry.

In Camp Logan, our Black Regiment, a part of the Thirty-third Illinois National Guard Division, went into intensive training. We had high esprit de corps. Our officers lost no opportunity to lecture us on the importance of race loyalty and race pride. They went out to disprove the ideas spread by the white brass to the effect that Black soldiers could be good, but only when officered by whites.

Our solidarity was strengthened when the Army attempted to remove Colonel Charles R. Young from the regiment. Young was the first Black West Point graduate and the highest ranking Black officer in the Regular Army. He wanted to go overseas very badly, but it was quite clear that they did not want a Black officer of his rank over there. He was examined by an Army medical board and found unfit for overseas service. We all knew it was a fraud. It was in all the Black papers and was known by Blacks throughout the country.

We men didn't let our officers down. We were out to show the whites that not only were we as good in everything as they, but better. In Camp Logan, our regiment held division championships in most of the sports: track, boxing, baseball, etc. We had the highest number of marksmen, sharpshooters and expert riflemen. Of course, there was no socializing between Blacks and whites, but it was clear that we had the respect, if not the friendship, of many of the white soldiers in the division.

In fact, despite all the efforts of the command, there was a certain degree of solidarity between Black and white soldiers in our division. In Spartanburg, North Carolina, white soldiers from New York came to the defense of their Black fellows of the Fifteenth New York when the latter were attacked by Southern whites. Many of us felt that in the case of a showdown in town with the local crackerdom, we could get support from some of the white members of our division who happened to be around. At least, we felt they would not side with the crackers against us.

The high morale of the regiment, the new tolerance (at least on the part of the local white establishment), the new spirit of Houston Blacks were all displayed during the parade of our division in downtown Houston. About two months before our departure, we received notice from headquarters that the regiment was to participate in a parade. We were to pass in review before Governor Howden of Illinois, our host governor of Texas, high brass from the War Department and other notables.

We spent a couple of days getting our clothes and equipment into shape. We washed and starched our khaki uniforms, bleached our canvas leggings snow white, cleaned and polished our rifles and side arms, shined our shoes to a mirror gloss. On the day of the parade, we marched the five miles into town, halting just before we reached the center of the city. We wiped the dust from our rifles and shoes and continued the march.

Executing perfectly the change from squad formation to platoon front, we entered the main square. With our excellent band playing the Illinois March, we passed the reviewing stand with our special rhythmic swagger which only Black troops could affect. We were greeted by a thunderous ovation from the crowds, especially the Blacks.

I believe all of Black Houston turned out that day. The next morning, the *Houston Post,* a white daily, headlined a story about the parade and declared that "the best looking outfit in the parade was the Negro Eighth Illinois."

Given final leave, we bid good-bye to our girls and friends in Houston. After that, security was clamped down and no one was allowed to leave the camp. A few days later, we boarded the train and were on our way to a port of embarkation. We didn't know where we were headed but suspected it was New York. Instead, five days later, we wound up in Camp Stewart near Newport News, Virginia.

In Newport News, we barely escaped a serious confrontation with some local crackers and the police. The first batches of our fellows given passes to the town were subjected to the taunts and slurs of the local cops.

"Why don't you darkies stay in camp? We don't want you downtown making trouble."

Several fights ensued. Some of the men from our regiment were arrested and others literally driven out of town. They returned to the barracks, some of them badly beaten, and told us what had happened. A repetition of the riot of the Twenty-fourth Infantry at Houston was narrowly averted, as a number of us grabbed our guns and were about to head downtown. We were turned back, however, by our officers, who intervened and pleaded with us to return to our barracks. Among them was Lt. Benote Lee, whom we all loved and respected.

"Don't play into the hands of these crackers," he said. "We'll be leaving any day now. All they want is to get us in trouble on the eve of our departure."

"How about our guys who were arrested?" we asked.

"Don't worry. We'll get them out."

We returned to the barracks and, sure enough, our comrades were returned the next day, escorted by white MPs. We spent the next days on standby orders, apparently waiting for our ship to arrive. After that, all leaves were cancelled.

It was on the same day, I believe, that we first learned that we had been separated from our Thirty-third Illinois Division. Henceforth, we were to be known as the 370th Infantry.

One morning shortly after this, we looked down into the harbor and saw three big ships. We knew then that we would soon be on our way. The following morning the regiment marched down to the dockside to board ship. Yet another incident occurred at the dock. We lined up in company front facing the harbor and halted a few yards from the fence which ran the entire length of the dock.

Facing us in front of the fence were several groups of loitering white native males, probably dockworkers. They stared at us as if we were some strange species. Our captain apparently wanted to move the company closer to the fence and gave the command, "Forward march." But he "forgot" to call "halt." That was all we needed.

We were still angry about the beating of our comrades in downtown Newport News a few days before. We marched directly into the whites, closing in on them, cursing and cuffing them with fists and rifle butts, kicking and kneeing them; in short, applying the skills of close order combat we had learned during our basic training. Of course, we didn't want to kill anybody, we just wanted to rough them up a bit.

We were finally stopped by the excited cries of our officers, "Halt! Halt!" We withdrew, opening up a path through which our victims ran or limped away. Then at the command of "Attention! Right face!" we marched along the dock in columns of two's and finally boarded the ship.

ON TO FRANCE

We sailed for France in early April 1918, on the old USS *Washington,* a passenger liner converted into a troop ship. I have crossed the Atlantic many times since, but I can truthfully say that

I have never experienced rougher seas. Our three ships sailed out of Newport News without escort. Of course, we were worried; there were rumors of German submarines. Our anxiety was relieved when in mid-ocean we picked up two escort vessels, one of which was the battle cruiser *Covington.* When we reached the war zone, about three days out of Brest, a dozen destroyers took over, circling our ships all the way into port.

It took us sixteen days in all to reach Brest, France, where we arrived on April 22. We were so weak on landing that one-half of the regiment fell out while climbing the hill to the old Napoleon Barracks where we were quartered. Immediately upon our arrival, we were put to work cleaning up ourselves and our equipment, notwithstanding our weakened condition.

The next morning we passed in review before some U.S. and French big brass. The following day we boarded a train. We crossed the whole of France from east to west and detrained at Granvillars, a village in French Alsace, close to the Swiss frontier. There we found out that we had been brigaded with and were to be an integral part of the French Army.

The reason we were separated from the white Americans was, as the white brass put it, "to avoid friction." But the American command of General Pershing was not satisfied just to separate us; they tried to extend the long arm of Jim Crow to the French. The American Staff Headquarters, through its French mission, tried to make sure that the French understood the status of Blacks in the United States. Their *Secret Information Bulletin Concerning Black American Troops* is now notorious, though I did not learn of it until after I had returned from France. The Army of Democracy spoke to its French allies:

> It is important for French officers who have been called upon to exercise command over black American troops, or to live in close contact with them, to have an exact idea of the position occupied by Negroes in the United States. The increasing number of Negroes in the United States (about 15,000,000) would create for the white race in the Republic a menace of degeneracy were it not that an impassable gulf has been made between them....

> Although a citizen of the United States, the black man is regarded by the white American as an inferior being with whom relations of business or service only are possible. The black is constantly being censured for his want of intelligence and discretion, his lack of civic and professional conscience, and for his tendency toward undue familiarity.
>
> The vices of the Negro are a constant menace to the American who has to repress them sternly. For instance, the black American troops in France have, by themselves, given rise to as many complaints for attempted rape as the rest of the army....
>
> Conclusion:
> 1. We must prevent the rise of any pronounced degree of intimacy between French officers and black officers. We may be courteous and amiable with these last, but we cannot deal with them on the same plane as with the white American officers without deeply wounding the latter. We must not eat with them, must not shake hands or seek to talk or meet with them outside the requirements of military service.
> 2. We must not commend too highly the black American troops, particularly in the presence of [white] Americans....
> 3. Make a point of keeping the native cantonment population from "spoiling" the Negroes. [White] Americans become greatly incensed at any public expression of intimacy between white women with black men....Familiarity on the part of white women with black men is furthermore a source of profound regret to our experienced colonials, who see in it an overweening menace to the prestige of the white race.[7]

Apparently this classic statement of U.S. racism was ineffectual with the French troops and people, even though it was supplemented by wild stories circulated by the white U.S. troops. These included the claim that Blacks had tails like monkeys, which was especially told to women, including those in the brothels.

Our regiment was not sorry to be incorporated into the French military. In fact, most of us thought it was the best thing that could have happened. The French treated Blacks well—that is, as human beings. There was no Jim Crow. At the time, I thought the French seemed to be free of the virulent U.S. brand of racism.

The American Command not only wanted its front line to be all white, it also wanted all regiment commanders (even those under the French) to be white. Consequently, our Black colonel, Franklin A. Dennison; our lieutenant colonel, James H. Johnson; and two of our majors (battalion commanders) were replaced by white officers. Colonel Dennison was sent back to the States, kicked upstairs, given the rank of brigadier general, and placed in command of the Officer Training Camp for Colored Men at Fort Des Moines, Iowa. Although our first reaction was anger, we became reconciled to the shift.

Our new white colonel, T. A. Roberts, seemed to be warm, paternalistic and deeply concerned about the welfare of his men. He would often make the rounds of the field kitchens, tasting the food and admonishing the cooks about ill-prepared food. He even gave instructions on how the various dishes should be cooked. Naturally, this made a great hit with the men. Our confidence in him was high because we felt that he was a professional soldier who knew his business.[8]

I remember the day the new colonel took over. The regiment formed in the village square. Colonel Roberts introduced himself. He seemed quite modest. He said that he was honored to be our new commander and that he knew the record of our regiment dating back to 1892 and its exploits during the Spanish-American War.

"Since West Point," he said, "I have always served with colored troops—the Ninth and Tenth Cavalry." He then turned to Captain Patton, our Black regiment adjutant. "Captain Patton knows me, he was one of my staff sergeants in the old Tenth Cavalry." Patton nodded.

The colonel smiled and pointed to our top sergeant. "Over there is Mark Thompson. I remember him when he was company clerk in Troop C of the Tenth Cavalry." He went on to point out a dozen or so officers and non-coms with whom he had served in the Ninth or Tenth Cavalry. "These men will tell you where I stand with respect to the race issue and everything else. We are going into the lines soon and I am sure that the men of this regiment will pile up a record of which your people and the whole of America will be proud."

The process of integration into the French Army was thorough. The American equipment with which we had trained at home was taken away and we were issued French weapons—rifles, carbines, machine guns, automatic rifles, pistols, helmets, gas masks and knapsacks. We were even issued French rations—with the exception of the wine, which our officers apparently felt we could not handle. We got all the wine we wanted anyway from the French troops. They were issued a liter (about a quart) a day and for a few centimes could buy more at the canteen.

The regiment was completely reorganized along French lines, with a machine gun company to every battalion. My Company E of the Second Battalion was converted into Machine Gun Company No. 2. We entered a six-week period of intensive training under French instructors to master our new weapons. Our main weapon was the old air-cooled Hotchkiss. And we had to master the enemy's gun, the water-cooled Maxim.

The period of French training was not an easy one. It was a miserable spring—dark and dreary, and it rained incessantly the whole time we were there. There was a lot of illness—grippe, pneumonia and bronchitis. We lost a number of men, several from our company. The men were in a sullen mood as the time approached for the regiment to move up to the front.

Disgruntlement was often voiced in the now familiar form of "What are we doing over here? Germans ain't done nothing to us. It's those crackers we should be fighting." While we were lined up in the square one day, our captain took the occasion to comment on these sentiments.

"Well," he said, "I've been hearing all this stuff about guys saying that they weren't going to fight the Germans. Well, we certainly can't make you fight if you don't want to. But I'll tell you one thing we can and will do is take you up to the front where the Germans are, and you can use your own judgment as to whether you fight them or not."

In early June 1918, we entered the trenches at the St. Mihiel Salient near the Swiss frontier as a part of the Tenth Division of the French Army under General Mittelhauser. We were intermingled with the French troops in the Tenth Division so that our officers and men might observe and profit by close association with veteran soldiers. At that time St. Mihiel was a quiet sector. Except for occasional shelling, desultory machine gun and rifle fire, nothing much occurred. We lost no men.

It was here, however, that we made our first acquaintance with two pests—the rat and the louse—whom thereafter were our inseparable companions for our entire stay at the front. Undoubtedly there were more rats than men; there were hordes of them. Regiments and battalions of rats. They were the largest rats I had ever seen. We soon became tired of killing them; it seemed a wasted effort. Some of the rats became quite bold, even impudent. They seemed to say, "I've got as much right here as you have." They would walk along, pick up food scraps and eat them right there in front of you! The dark dug-outs were their real havens. When we slept we would keep our heads covered with blankets as protection against rat bites. This may seem flimsy protection, but we were so conditioned that we would awake at any attempt on the part of a rat to bite through the blanket. I have often wondered why there were so few rat bites. Probably the rats felt that it was not worthwhile fooling with live humans when there were so many dead ones around. We soon got used to the rats and learned to live with them.

It was the same with the lice. I woke up lousy after my first sleep in a dug-out. My reaction to the pests took the following progression: first, I was besieged by interminable itching, followed by depression. Then I began to lose appetite and weight, finally becoming quite ill. All this was within a period of a few days. Most of the fellows exhibited the same symptoms.

One might say that our illness was mainly psychological, but it was nonetheless real. Since this was a quiet front, I had no difficulty in getting permission to go back to the rear for a few hours. Foolishly, I thought if I could get cleaned up just once, I would feel a lot better. I got some delousing soap, took a bath and washed my clothes. I then returned to the front, stood machine gun watch and then went into the dug-out for a nap. Needless to say, I woke up lousy again.

I told my troubles to an old French veteran who had been assigned to my machine gun squad. "Oh, it's nothing! You must forget all about it," he said. "You'll get used to it. I've been at the front for nearly four years and I've been lousy all the time, except when I was in the hospital or at home on leave."

I took his advice which was all to the good, because I was not to be rid of these pests until six months later during my sojourn in hospitals at Mantes-sur-Seine and Paris after the Armistice. Even then, it was only a temporary respite, for I was reinfected upon rejoining my regiment at the embarkation port of Brest. After a brief stay with the regiment, I was returned to the hospital, again deloused, only to be reinfected again on the hospital ship returning to the States. I parted company with my last louse at the debarkation hospital at Grand Central Palace in New York City.

We remained in the St. Mihiel sector about two weeks. We were then withdrawn and moved into a sector in the Argonne Forest near Verdun, site of the great battles of 1916; we arrived there in late July 1918. We were still brigaded with the Tenth French Division. The area around Verdun was a vast cemetery with a half million crosses of those who had perished in that great holocaust, each bearing the legend, *Mort Pour La France.*

The Argonne at that time was also a quiet sector. But it was here that we suffered our first casualty, Private Robert M. Lee of Chicago. The incident occurred during machine gun target practice. The first and second line trenches ran along parallel hills about a hundred yards apart. The French had set up a make-shift range in the valley in between the trenches. Behind the gun there was a two or three foot rise in the earth, on which a number of us French and Blacks were sitting, chewing the rag, awaiting our turn at the machine gun.

Suddenly, there was a short burst of machine gun fire. It was not from our guns. Bullets whizzed over our heads—they seemed to be coming from behind the target. All of us scrambled to get into the communication trench which opened on the valley. Second Lieutenant Binga DesMond, our platoon commander (and the University of Chicago's great sprinting star), fell from the embankment on top of me. Fortunately, he was not hit. But even with his 180 pounds on my back, I am sure I made that ten or fifteen yards to the communication trench, crawling on my hands and knees, as fast as he could have sprinted the distance!

The fire was coming from behind the target. What obviously had happened was that the Germans had cased the position of our guns and had somehow got around behind the target and waited for a pause in our target practice to open fire on us. We never found out how they did it, for none of us knew the exact topography of the place. The French of course knew it, but they had assured us that the place was safe and that they had been using the range for months.

We were crouched down, panting, in the communication trench for about five minutes after the German guns ceased fire. The French lieutenant (bless his soul) then sent a French gun crew out to get the gun. To our great surprise they also brought back Robert M. Lee. He was quite dead, with bullets right through the heart. He had evidently been hit by the first burst and had fallen forward in front of the embankment. All of us were deeply saddened by the incident.

No one spoke as we bore his body back to the rear. He was only nineteen, a very sweet fellow, and he was our first casualty. We buried him down in the valley, beside the graves of those fallen at Verdun. The funeral was quite impressive. He was given a hero's burial, with representatives both from our regiment and our French counterparts. We were especially impressed by the appearance of General Mittelhauser who came down from Division Headquarters to express condolences and appreciation to the Black troops now under his command.

THE SOISSONS SECTOR

Despite the fact that we had been in a quiet sector, it was still the front lines with its daily tensions of anticipated attack. In the middle of August, we were pulled out of the Argonne sector and sent to rest behind the lines near Bar-le-Duc. We were deeply pleased by the hospitality and kindness extended to us by the townspeople there. They invited us into their homes and plied us with food and wine. Half-jokingly they told us to come back after the war and we could have our pick of the girls. As we did throughout our stay in France, we deported ourselves well. For pleasures of the flesh, there were a number of legal houses of prostitution, or "houses of pleasure" as they were called by the French. It was with regret that we left that area.

By this time, we had become an integral part of the French Army. Along with our French equipment, training and so forth, we had affected the style of the French *poilu* (doughboy). The flaps of our overcoats were buttoned back in order to give us more leg room while on the march, as was their style. Like the French infantry, we used walking sticks, which helped to ease the burden of our seventy pounds of equipment. French peasants along the road, hearing our strange language and noticing our color, would often mistake us for French colonials. Not Senegalese, who were practically all black but Algerians, Moroccans or Sudanese. We would swing along the road to the tune of our favorite marching song:

My old mistress promised me,
Raise a ruckus tonight,
When she died she'd set me free,
Raise a ruckus tonight.

She lived so long her head got bald,
Raise a ruckus tonight.
She didn't get to set me free at all,
Raise a ruckus tonight!

Oh, come along, little children come along,
While the moon is shining bright;
Get on board on down the river flow,
Gonna' raise a ruckus tonight.

But we had not escaped the long arm of American racism. We were rudely confronted with this reality upon our arrival in a small town on the Compiègne front in the department of Meuse. We entrained here for our next front. The regiment was confronted dramatically with the effects of the racist campaign launched by the American high brass.

Upon entering the town, the regiment was drawn up in battalion formation in the square. Before being assigned to billets, we were informed by the battalion commander that a Black soldier from a labor battalion had been court martialed and hanged in the very square where we were standing. It had happened just a few weeks before our arrival. His crime was the raping of a village girl. His body had been left hanging there for twenty-four hours, as a demonstration of American justice.

"As a result," he told us, "you may find the town population hostile. In case this is so," the major warned, "you are not to be provoked or to take umbrage at any discourtesies, but are to deport yourselves as gentlemen at all times." In any case, we were to be there only for a few days, during which time we were to remain close to our barracks. Then, in a lowered voice, he muttered, "This is what I have been told to tell you."

We kept close to our billets the first day or so, but then gradually ventured further into town. At first, the townsfolk seemed to be aloof, but the coolness was gradually broken down, probably as a result of our correct deportment, especially our attitude towards the children (with whom we always immediately struck up friendships). Friendly relations were finally established with the villagers. When we asked about the hanging, they shrugged the matter off.

"So what? That was only one soldier. The others were nice enough." When asked why they had been so aloof when we first arrived, they said it was the result of the warnings of the white officers. "They didn't want us to fraternize with the Blacks."

Continuing the conversation, they seemed puzzled about why the sentence had been so severe and the body barbarously left exposed in the square. *"Très brutale, très horrible!"* they exclaimed. With regard to the girl, "Ah, she had been raped many times before," one of them jeered.

After two weeks of rest, the regiment began to move by stages toward the front lines again. A few days later, we boarded a train consisting of a long line of box-cars. Each car was marked: *"Quarante hommes ou huit chevaux."* (Forty men or eight horses.)

The last couple of months had been quiet and relatively pleasant, with the exception of the Lee incident and the events just related. But now, we felt, we were going into the thick of it. The premonition was confirmed the very next morning when we woke (that is, those of us who had been able to sleep in such crowded conditions).

We were passing through Château-Thierry. There could be no doubt about it, even though part of the sign had been blown away and only the word "Thierry" remained. The woods around the station and Belleau Woods, a few miles further on, looked like they had been hit by a cyclone: broken and uprooted trees, gaping shell holes, men from the Graves Registration walking around with crosses, Black Pioneers removing ammunition. All were grim reminders of the great battles that had been fought there by American troops only several weeks before.

We were on the Soissons front, where we became part of the famous Armée Mangin. General Mangin (*le boucher* or the butcher as he was called by the French) was commander of the Tenth Army of France, among whom were a number of shock troops: Chausseurs Alpines, Chausseurs d'Afrique (Algerians and Moroccans), Senegalese riflemen and the Foreign Legion. His army was pivotal in breaking the Hindenburg Line about Soissons. On this front, we were brigaded with the Fifty-ninth French Division, under the command of General Vincendon.

We bypassed Thierry and Belleau Woods and detrained at the village of Villers-Cotterêts, the birthplace of Alexandre Dumas. The atmosphere was charged with expectancy. Observation balloons hung like giant sausages on the horizon. Big guns rumbled ominously in the distance. A steady stream of ambulances carrying wounded jammed the roads leading from the front. Obviously a big battle was in progress not too far away. But it turned out that we were not going into that sector. We left the village and marched west to Crépy-en-Valois. Turning north through the Compiègne Forest, we reached the Aisne River at a point near Vic-sur-Aisne and continued on to Resson-le-Long where we established our depot company. The march from the railhead to Resson took about three days. It was a forced march and covered about twenty-five kilometers (fifteen miles) a day.

This was pretty rough after the restless night we had spent on the crowded train. As one of the company wags observed, "One thing 'bout these kilo*meet*ers, they sho' will kill you if you keep on meetin' 'em."

Our regiment spent six months in the lines in all. We took part in the fifty-nine day drive of Mangin's Tenth Army which ended on the day of the Armistice. During that period, one or another of our units was always under fire or fighting. Our toughest battles were at the Death Valley Jump Off near the Aisne Canal, the taking of Mont Singes (Monkey Mountain which was later renamed Hill 370 in honor of our regiment), fighting at a railroad embankment northwest of Guilleminet Farm, and the advance into the Hindenburg Line at the Oise-Aisne Triangle.

It was in the battles on the Hindenburg Line that we met the strongest enemy resistance and sustained most of our losses. The enemy resistance was broken in these battles and they began a general withdrawal, at first orderly and accompanied by brief rearguard actions. Finally, there was the flight to the Belgian frontier, destroying roads and railroads on orders to impede our advance. After Laon, their flight was so precipitous that we had difficulty maintaining contact. We entered many villages which they had left the day before.

Our outfit was the first allied troops to enter the fortified city of Laon, wresting it from the Germans after four years of war. We were greeted with tremendous elation by the population, who had lived under German occupation the whole of that period.

The regiment was highly praised by the French. It won twenty-one Distinguished Service Crosses, sixty-eight Croix de Guerre and one Distinguished Service Medal. In the whole two months' drive, casualties were 500 killed and wounded—a total of about one-fifth of the regiment. These casualties were light when compared with those of Black regiments on other fronts. For example, the 371st Infantry of drafted men lost 1,065 out of 2,384 men in three days' fighting during the great September defensive on the Compiègne Front. I believe that the German resistance on these other fronts, east and west of Soissons, was more stubborn than on our front.

All of our Black regiments were fortunate to have been brigaded with the French. In this respect, the American High Command did us a big favor, unintentionally, I am sure. For as far as we were able to observe, the French made no discrimination in the treatment of Black officers and men, with whom they fraternized freely. They regarded us as brothers-in-arms.

Similarly, the French people in the villages in which we stopped or were stationed were uniformly courteous and friendly, and we made many friends. I must say that we were also on our best behavior. I don't remember a single incident of misbehavior on the part of our men toward French villagers. The latter were quick to notice this and to contrast our gentlemanly deportment with the rudeness of the white Americans. Many of the white soldiers made no effort to hide their disdain for the French (whom they regarded as inferiors) and commonly referred to them as "frogs."

But even as we fought, we were being stabbed in the back by the American High Command. We were not to learn, however, until our return to the States of the slanderous, racist document issued by the American General Staff Headquarters through its brainwashed French Mission (the *Secret Information Concerning Black American Troops* referred to earlier).

We learned also that the hanging of the Black soldier on the Compiègne Front was not an isolated incident, but part of a deliberate campaign conducted by higher and lower echelons in the American Command to influence French civilians against Blacks. The campaign focused on the effort to build up the Black rapist scare among them.

Such was a memorandum issued by headquarters of the Ninety-second Division (a Black division officered largely by whites) on August 21, 1918. Its purpose was to "prevent the presence of colored troops from being a menace to women." The memorandum read in part:

> On account of increasing frequency of the crime of rape, or attempted rape, in this Division, drastic preventive measures have become necessary...Until further notice, there will be a check of all troops of the 92nd Division every hour daily

> between reveille and 11 P.M., with a written record showing how each check was made, by whom, and the result...the one-mile limit regulation will be strictly enforced at all times, and no passes will be issued except to men of known reliability.

This was followed the next day by another memorandum saying that the commander-in-chief of the American Expeditionary Forces "would send the 92nd Division back to the States or break it up into labor battalions as unfit to bear arms in France, if efforts to prevent rape were not taken more seriously."[9]

As a result, Dr. Robert R. Moton of Tuskegee was sent by President Wilson and the secretary of war to investigate the charges. He found only one case of rape in the whole division of 15,000 men. Two other men who were from labor battalions in the Ninety-second area were convicted. One of these was hanged, and I'm sure that this was the unfortunate soldier whom we saw on the Compiègne Front. General headquarters was forced to admit that the crime of rape, as later stated by Moton, "was no more prevalent among coloured soliders than among white, or any other soldiers."[10]

This whole racist smear of Black troops, I was to conclude later, represented but an extension to France of the anti-Black racist campaign then current in the States. It was designed to maintain Black subjugation and prevent its erosion by liberal racial attitudes of the French. Back in the States, the campaign was marked by an upturn of lynchings during the war years, with thirty-eight Black victims in 1917 and half again that number in the following year. Even then, things were working up to the bloody riots of 1919.

In contrast to all of this, the appreciation of the French for Black soldiers from the U.S. was shown by the accolade given by the French division commander, General Vincendon, to our regiment. On December 19, 1918, we were transferred from the French Army back to the American Army. On that day, General Order 4785, directed to the Fifty-ninth Division of the Army of France, was read to the officers and men of the 370th. It commended us for our contributions to France. I remember being struck by the poetry of the language, it was all beautifully French to me:

> We at first, in September at Mareuil-sur-Ourcq, admitted your fine appearance under arms, the precision of your review, the suppleness of your evolutions that presented to the eye the appearance of silk unrolling its waves...

Further on in remembering our dead, the communique read:

> The blood of your comrades who fell on the soil of France, mixed with the blood of our soldiers, renders indissoluble the bonds of affection that unite us.[11]

THE ROAD HOME

The road back from Soissons lay through the old battlefields where we had fought a couple of months before. Near Anizy-le-Château there were crosses marking the graves of some of our comrades who had died in the fighting there. We paused before the graves, seeking out those of the comrades we knew. We all had the same thoughts: "What rotten luck that they should die almost in sight of victory."

Among the crosses, there was one marked "Sergeant Theodore Gamelin." Gamelin hadn't died in combat. I remember the incident clearly. We were all lined up in some hastily dug trenches that morning, waiting for the "over the top" signal. The cooks had just distributed reserved rations. These consisted of a half-loaf of French bread (not the crispy white kind, but a coarse grayish loaf baked especially for the troops, which we called "war bread") and a big bar of chocolate. Somehow, Gamelin had missed out on these rations. Jump-off time was drawing near. He looked around and his eyes fixed upon a private named Brown, who was sitting on the firing step, putting his rations in a knapsack. Now, Private Brown was one of those quiet, meek little fellows. He always took low, was never known to fight. But Brown was the type of man, I have observed, who can become dangerous. This is particularly true in a combat situation where one doesn't know whether one will live five minutes longer. Gamelin, a big bullying type, an amateur boxer and very unpopular with his men, called to Brown:

"Give me some of that bread, Brown. I didn't get my rations."

"Now, that's just too bad, sergeant," Brown responded. "I'm not going to give you any of this bread. It's not my fault you missed your rations."

Gamelin, with one hand on his pistol, moved as though he were going to seize the bread. Brown had his rifle lying across his lap. He simply raised it and coolly pulled the trigger. The sergeant fell dead!

The platoon commander heard the commotion and ran to the spot, inquiring about what had happened. The men told him that Gamelin was trying to take Brown's reserve rations and had made a move toward his pistol. Brown, they said, had shot in self-defense.

Obviously nothing could be done about Brown in those circumstances. So the lieutenant said, "Consider yourself under arrest, Brown. We will take this matter up after this action."

Unfortunately, Brown was killed a few days later. The memory of this incident was on our minds as we viewed Gamelin's grave. His helmet hung on a cross, which ironically bore the inscription "Sergeant Theodore Gamelin—Mort Pour La France (Died for France), September 1918."

I had gone through six months at the front without a scratch or a day of illness. But as we neared Soissons, I began to feel faint and light-headed. By the time we reached the city, I had developed quite a high fever. It was the period of the first great flu epidemic which wreaked havoc among U.S. troops in France. I reported to the infirmary and lined up with a group of about fifty men. The medical sergeant took our temperatures and then tied tags to our coats. I looked at mine and it read "influenza." We were evacuated to a field hospital near Soissons, where I remained for about five days. After that, we boarded a hospital train and were told that we were going to the big base hospital in Paris. Now, I liked that.

I had never seen Paris and was most anxious to visit the famed city before going home. There were two of us in the compartment, another soldier from the regiment and myself. I felt a little drowsy, so I told my compartment mate that I was going to take a little nap and to wake me up when the chow came around. I "awoke" five days later in a French hospital at Mantes-sur-Seine, near Paris.

They had put me off the train as an emergency case just before Paris. I came out of a coma to find a number of strange people around my bed—nurses who were Catholic nuns, doctors and a number of patients. They were all smiling. "Thank God, young man," said the doctor, "we thought we were going to lose you. You've been in a coma for five days, but you're going to be all right now."

"Where am I? Is this Paris?" I asked.

"No, this is Mantes-sur-Seine, close to Paris. They had to put you off here as an emergency case."

"What's wrong with me?" I asked.

"Oh, you've had a little kidney infection and it has affected your heart."

"That sounds bad," I said.

"Well, you're young and have a remarkable constitution. You'll pull through all right—you're out of danger now," he assured me.

I remained in the hospital for about a month, receiving the kindest and most solicitous attention from nurses, doctors and patients. All seemed to regard me as their special charge. No one spoke English, but I got along all right. It was like a crash course in French. They told me I had a beautiful accent. They brought in an old lady to talk English with me, but she bored me to death. Really, my French was better than her English. She came once and didn't return.

I was feeling much better when the head sister came to me one evening to tell me I was to leave the next morning for Paris and the American hospital at Neuilly.

"You've never been to Paris, have you?" she asked.

"No," I said.

"Well, you've got a treat coming!"

I was filled with great expectations. The next morning, after embracing all my fellow patients and exchanging warm goodbyes with the doctor and sisters, the head nurse (or sister) took me out in front of the hospital where an American ambulance was waiting.

"Hop in, buddy," said the driver.

"Haywood, be sure to write us when you get back to Chicago," said the sister. "Remember we are your friends and want to know how you are getting along."

I promised that I would. As we pulled out, she stood on the road waving a white handkerchief and continued to wave it as long as we were in sight. I never wrote them, but often thought of them.

Paris, you wondrous city! I was feeling good that morning as we pulled into the hospital at Neuilly. The hospital was situated on the Avenue Neuilly near the Boulevard de la Grande Armée, only a few blocks from the Arc de Triomphe. It was a veritable palace. I was assigned to a ward in which there were only four guys, three Australians and one white American from Wisconsin. They greeted me and gave me a run-down on the situation. They were having a ball seeing Paris, taking in all the events, theaters, race tracks, boxing and girls. I don't believe that I saw a real sick man in that hospital. There were some of course, but they must have been secluded in some out of sight wards. We were all convalescents in our ward. A couple were recuperating from wounds received at the front.

"What do you do for money?" I asked.

"Oh, we don't worry about that—just stick around a while and we'll show you the ropes."

Under their tutelage, it didn't take me long to catch on. At that time there were dozens of rich American women, including a number from the social register in Paris. They were under the auspices of the Red Cross and had taken over the hospital and its patients as their special "war duty." They would organize excursions, get tickets for shows, sports events, etc. Coming to the hospital in relays, they would leave huge boxes of chocolates and other goodies.

We were showered with gifts—Gillette razors, Waterman fountain pens, and even some serviceable wrist watches if you asked for them. They would come in waves. Scarcely had one group left when another would come, leaving the same gifts. The guys had it down perfect. They always left one man on watch in the ward. He was there in case the gals would come in while the others were out and receive all the presents and gifts for them. He would point to the three unoccupied beds (there were only five of us in an eight bed ward) and pretend that their occupants were out in the streets. He would suggest that the presents be left for them, also. Old Wisconsin Slim was the real genius in all this. He even hung a couple of crosses over the unoccupied beds to give more substance to the fiction that they were occupied.

Every morning we would gather all our presents, take them to the gate, and sell them for a good price to the French who gathered there to buy them. We would then return to the ward and divide the "swag." Razors and fountain pens seemed to be rare in France at that time. The going rate for razors was about ten francs ($2) and for Waterman fountain pens even more. All this was carried out under the benign gaze of the hospital authorities.

Discipline was lax, almost nonexistent. We could stay out for two days at a time. The attitude seemed to be: let the boys have a good time, they deserve it. Besides, it's essential for their convalescence. When we would get a little money together (about once a week), we would run out to Montmartre and the famous Rue Pigalle, "Pig Alley," to see the girls.

As an old Francophile, I was also interested in French history and culture. I got a guidebook and spent days walking all over Paris, visiting all the historical places about which I had read, mentally reconstructing the events.

Time was passing rapidly. I had been in the hospital about two months when an administrator called me into his office.

"Well, Corporal Hall," he said. "I hope you've been having a good time in Paris."

"Oh yes," I replied.

"That's good," he said, "We're sending you back to your regiment tomorrow."

"Where are they?" I asked.

"They're in Brest, waiting to embark for the voyage home."

The next morning I got on the train at the Gare Ouest and arrived in Brest that evening. In Brest, I strolled around a bit on the waterfront and finally sat down at a sidewalk cafe. I was in no hurry to get back into the old regimental harness. I was about to order a drink when suddenly a big white MP appeared. Glowering at me, he said, “Where’s your pass, soldier?”

“Here it is. I’ve just got back from the hospital in Paris and I’m going to my outfit up on the hill,” I explained.

He grabbed it, glanced at it and shouted, “Well, get going up that hill right now. You’re not supposed to hang around here.”

I left without my drink and started climbing the hill to the old Napoleon barracks where we had been eleven months before. It seemed like that had been years ago, so much had been crowded into the brief intervening period.

I rejoined my outfit. They were living in tents in what seemed to me like a swamp. The weather was miserable, a steady cold rain. The mud was ankle deep. I was greeted warmly by my comrades. I don’t think that more than half the old boys of my company were left. The rest were dead, wounded, or ill in hospitals all over France.

A couple of bottles of cognac were produced. The guys started reminiscing about what they were going to do when they got home. The news from home was bad. Discrimination and Jim Crow were rampant, worse than before. Blacks were being lynched everywhere. “Now, they want us to go to war with Japan,” observed one of the fellows. (The Hearst newspapers at the time were again raising the specter of the “yellow peril.”)

“Well,” someone said, “they won’t get me to fight their yellow peril. If it comes to that, I’ll join the Japs. They are colored.” There was unanimous agreement on that point.

I bunked down that night and awoke the next morning with a high fever. I went to the infirmary and again was evacuated to a hospital. I immediately began to worry whether I would be able to return with my outfit. As I was waiting on the side of the road to hitch a ride to the hospital, I heard footsteps behind me. I turned and there was Colonel Roberts, our white commander whom I had not seen for months.

I started to spring to my feet and salute, but he motioned me to remain seated. “Corporal, you’re from our regiment, aren’t you?”

“Yes, sir,” I said, “I’m sick and going to the hospital.”

“What’s the matter?”

“I guess I got the flu.”

"Well," he said, "you're in no condition to walk that distance." He hailed a passing truck and instructed the driver to take me to the hospital. "Take care, son; we're going home soon. Try to come back with us." That's the last time I saw Colonel Roberts.

A month later, while in the hospital, I picked up the Paris edition of the *Herald Tribune.* The headline read: "The 370th Infantry (the old Eighth Illinois) returns and is given hero's welcome in victory parade down State Street." I felt pretty bad, because I could imagine my old Mother standing there waiting for me to pass by. Since I hadn't written in months, she would probably assume the worst.

I had been away from the States for quite a while, in free France so to speak, and I had become less used to the American nigger-hating way of life. But I was thrown abruptly back into reality as soon as I crossed the threshold of the American Army hospital in Brest.

It seemed to be manned by an all Southern staff: doctors, nurses, etc. All of them spoke with broad Southern accents. I was assigned a bed at one end of the ward. When I looked around, I could see only Blacks were in that end. Whites were at the other end. There were no screens, no Jim Crow signs. The Jim Crow was de facto, but nonetheless real. I also noticed that there was a large space between the Black and white sections.

After a cursory entrance examination, the doctor seemed to think that I didn't have the flu, and upon hearing my recent medical history, he decided that it was a relapse of the old illness.

I had no sooner gotten settled when I heard a nurse bawling out a Black soldier for being so dirty. The poor fellow had just come in from some mud hole like the one in which my regiment was situated, where there was no opportunity to bathe.

"You don't see any of our white boys that dirty!" she shouted, her eyes flashing indignantly at what she, a white lady, was forced to put up with. For the first time, it occurred to me that our Black regiment had been put in a worse location than the whites. Now, that's pretty hard stuff for a front-line veteran to take. If I had been ill when I came in, I was really sick now. I could feel my blood pressure and fever mount.

There was a Black sergeant from my outfit in the same ward. He was a tall, dignified and proud looking man, convalescing from a previous illness. He wasn't a bed patient and was therefore supposed to make his own bed. This he did, but he never seemed to do it to the satisfaction of the nurse, who kept berating him.

"Make it over, that's not good enough."

"I've already made it, and I'm not going to do it again."

"Don't talk back to me," she shouted. "Make that bed!"

"I'm not going to," he said.

"You dare disobey my order?" she yelled.

"I'm a front-line soldier and you don't have to yell at me."

She turned and walked to the office and returned with the ward doctor, a little pip-squeak of a man. In a stentorian voice he said:

"Make that bed, soldier." The sergeant didn't move. The doctor looked at his watch and said, "I'm giving you two minutes to start making that bed. If you don't, I'm going to prefer charges against you for disobeying your superior officers."

You could see that the proud sergeant was thinking it over and coming to a decision. I could almost read his mind; it seemed that he was thinking that this wasn't the time to die. He only had a couple more months to go.

He finally burst into tears, but he got up and made the bed. I've seen this sort of situation before, and I feel almost certain that had there been a loaded gun around, the sergeant might have started shooting. It would have been reported in the news as "Another nigger runs amuck." All of us, including some of the whites, breathed a sigh of relief at this peaceful culmination of what could have been a dangerous incident. At least the nurse never bothered the sergeant after that. Undoubtedly, she sensed the inherent danger of any further provocation.

After my stay in Paris, I was seized periodically by moods of depression. These deepened and became chronic during my stay at the Brest hospital, especially after witnessing such humiliating incidents. I felt that I could never again adjust myself to the conditions of Blacks in the States after the spell of freedom from racism in France. I did not want to go back and my feeling was shared by many Black soldiers.

I thought of remaining in France, getting my discharge there and possibly becoming a French citizen. But I did not know how to go about this. Besides, I was ill, and there was my Mother whom I wanted to see again. Probably, some day, if I got well, I would come back—or so I thought as I lay in the hospital at Brest.

Finally, the day came. We were discharged from the hospital, given casual's pay (one month's pay), which in my case amounted to $33, and boarded the ship for home. There was no change in the Jim Crow pattern. We were merely transferred from a Jim Crow hospital to a Jim Crow hospital ship. We Blacks found ourselves quartered in a separate section of the ship. The segregation, however, did not extend to the mess hall or the lavatories (heads). I guess that would have been too much trouble. But the ship's military command passed up no opportunity to let us know our place.

For example, on the first day out we were given tickets for mess—breakfast, lunch and supper. We were supposed to present them to a checker who stood at the foot of the stairway leading up to the mess hall. A Black soldier who had evidently misplaced his ticket tried to slip by the checker unnoticed, but he was not quick enough. A cracker officer who was standing by the checker hollered: "Hey, Nigger, come back here!"

The guy kept going and tried to merge into a group of us Blacks who had already passed through. Again the officer shouted, "Nigger, come back here. You, I mean. I mean the tall one over there. That nigger knows who I'm calling." The soldier finally turned and walked back. Purple with rage, protected by his bars and white skin, the officer said, "Listen, you Black son of a bitch, where is your ticket?" Clearly, the officer had already gauged his man and concluded that there was no fight in him.

"I couldn't find it," said the soldier.

"Well, why didn't you say that in the first place instead of tryin' to slip through heah? Well, you go on back and try to find it. If you can't, see the sergeant in charge. Don't evah try that trick again," said the officer. His anger seemed to ebb and a glow of self-satisfaction spread across his face. He had done his chore for the day. He had put a nigger in his place.

The seas were rough again. It was a small ship, leased from the Japanese. Most of us were seasick. The sailors were having a ball at our expense. When one of us would rush to the rail to vomit, one of them would holler, “A dollar he comes.”

One night, the ship tilted sharply and a number of us were thrown out of our bunks. The bunks were in tiers and I was in a top one. I got a pretty hard bump. The next morning on deck the sailors were talking loudly among themselves (for our benefit of course).

“Gee,” said one, “this is the roughest sea I’ve ever seen. This old pile is about to come apart. The Japs leased us the worst ship they had.”

“It just might be sabotage,” another one suggested.

“I hope we make it, but I’m not so sure,” said another.

Not being seamen, most of us were taking this seriously. A Black soldier turned to me and said, “You know man, after all I’ve been through, if this ship were to sink now almost in sight of home, I would get off and walk the water like the good Lord.”

Another voice, that of a white sergeant from Florida who had been rather friendly to us: “You know,” he drawled, “this reminds me of old Sam down home.”

Here it comes, we thought, one of those nigger jokes.

“He was up theah on the gallows with a rope around his neck and the sheriff said, ‘Well Sam, is there anything you want to say before you die?’

“ ‘All I got to say sheriff,’ said Sam, ‘this sho’ would be a lesson to me.’ ”

The voyage proceeded uneventfully, with one exception. The gamblers among us were out to get the soldiers’ casual pay. The law of concentration of money into fewer and fewer hands was in process. This was taking place in one of the endless crap games which started in the Bay of Biscay and wound up at Sandy Hook.

I never really gambled, even in the Army with room and board guaranteed. If you were broke, you could always borrow some money. The lender knew you couldn’t run out on him. His only risk was that you might become a casualty. But motivated by nothing more than sheer boredom, I got into the game this time.

After all, what good was $33 going to do me? To my surprise, I hit a streak of luck and over a period of a week in and out of the game, I ran my paltry grub stake up to the tremendous sum of $1200. That was the high point, after which time my luck began to peter out. Nevertheless, I left the ship with $500. It was my last gambling venture.

That morning, we lined up at the rail as our ship passed Sandy Hook and pulled into New York Harbor. It was my first view of the New York skyline. Overcome with emotion, tears welled up in my eyes. Embarrassed, I looked around and found that I was not alone. The guy next to me was obviously crying.

Our landing was a memorable one. Ship stacks were blasting, foghorns blowing, bells were ringing and fire boats were sending up great sprays of water. Passengers in ferryboats were waving and shouting greetings.

Upon docking, we were met by two reception committees of young women. A white one to receive the white soldiers and a Black one to greet us. This time segregation didn't bother us at all, we were so pleased to see the pretty Black girls. They drew us aside as we came down the gang plank, ushered us into waiting ambulances, and drove us to Grand Central Palace which had been converted into a debarkation hospital. Leaving us in the lobby, they said goodbye and promised to come back soon and show us around.

A woman from the Red Cross took our home addresses to notify our families of our arrival. We were then escorted into a large room and told to strip off our clothes. Leaving them in the room, we then went through the delousing process. We were sprayed with some sort of chemical and washed off under showers. We were then given pajamas and a bathrobe and shown to our Jim Crow ward.

The next day, after a physical examination, we were paid off, receiving all of our back pay. In my case, it was for twelve months, amounting to about $450. This, plus the $500 I had won on the ship, seemed to me a small fortune, the largest amount of money I had ever had in my life. I was, so to speak, chafing at the bit, raring to get out and up to famed Harlem.

On the ship, I had met a Black sergeant named Patterson, who was from the 369th, the old Fifteenth New York. He had also won a considerable sum in the crap game. He suggested that we team up and go to Harlem together. He said he knew his way around there since that was where he lived before he joined the Army.

After the pay off, we were still without clothes. But a clothing salesman came around to take orders for new uniforms. Patterson and I ordered suits, for which we were measured. In a couple of hours the man was back with two brand new whip cord uniforms with chevrons and service stripes sewed on. We had also ordered shoes, which were promptly delivered. We then sneaked out of the hospital.

After we banked most of our money downtown, we took the subway up to 125th Street and visited several "Buffet Flats" (a current euphemism for a high-class whorehouse), drinking and looking over the girls. Patterson seemed to be an old friend of all the madams. They greeted him like a long lost brother. We finally wound up in one real classy joint where we stayed for four days, playing sultan-in-a-harem with the girls.

We returned to the hospital, expecting to be sharply reprimanded and restricted to quarters, but the doctor on his rounds merely asked, "Where have you boys been?" Before we could answer, he simply said, "I suggest that you stick around a day or two, we have some tests to make."

From New York, we left for Camp Grant near Rockford, Illinois, where we were demobilized out of the service. I was discharged on April 29, 1919. After a cursory examination, I was pronounced physically fit. "What about my chronic endocarditis and chronic nephritis?" I protested.

"Oh, you're all right, you've overcome it all. You're young and fit as a fiddle," the doctor answered me. From Camp Grant I returned home to Chicago to see my parents.

REUNION WITH OTTO

Not too long after my discharge, I came home one evening to find Otto. He had just arrived after mustering out of the service at

Camp Grant. We were all happy to see him, especially Mother. He showed us his honorable discharge.

"You know," he said, "I'm lucky to get this."

He then told stories about his harrowing experiences in a stevedore battalion in the South and then in France. The main mass of Black draftees had been relegated to these labor units, euphemistically called "service battalions," "engineers," "pioneer infantry," etc.

Regardless of education or ability, young Blacks were herded indiscriminately into these stevedore outfits and faced the drudgery and hard work with no possibility of promotion beyond the rank of corporal. With few exceptions, the officers were KKK whites, as also were the sergeants. Many of them were plantation riding boss types, especially recruited for these jobs. Southern newspapers openly carried want ads calling for white men who had "experience in handling Negroes." Black draftees were not only subjected to the drudgery of hard labor, but insults, abuse, and in many cases blows from white officers and sergeants.

Otto told us his worst experience was in Camp Stewart in Newport News, Virginia, where he was stationed during the terribly cold winter of 1917-18. For a considerable period after their arrival, they were forced to live in tents without floors or stoves. In most cases, they had only a blanket, some not even that.

New arrivals to the camp were forced to stand around fires outside all night or sleep under trees for partial protection from the weather. For months there were no bathing facilities nor clothing for the men. These conditions were subsequently changed as a result of protests by the men and reports by investigators.

His outfit landed in the port of St. Lazare, France, and during the great advance participated in the all-out effort to keep the front-lines supplied in the "race to Berlin." They worked from dawn to nightfall unloading supplies, including all kinds of railroad equipment, engines, tractors and bulldozers. They built and repaired roads, warehouses and barracks. Discipline was strict; guys were thrown in the guardhouse on the most flimsy pretexts. A Black soldier seen on the street with a French woman was likely to be arrested by the MPs. "The spirit of St. Lazare," said one officer, "is the spirit of the South."[12]

Needless to say, Otto often found himself in the guardhouse as a result of fights, AWOLs, etc. How he escaped general court martial or imprisonment I don't know.

His outfit was finally moved to the American military base at Le Mans, about a hundred miles from Paris. Things were somewhat better there. There were even a few "reliable" Black corporals who were allowed weekend passes to visit Paris. Otto was assigned to mess duty as a cook.

When he applied for leave, he was refused, however. "Well, I didn't intend to come this close to Paris without seeing it," he said, "so I went AWOL."

He did not see much of it, however, before he was arrested by MPs. I was surprised to learn that he had been in Paris during the period that I was in the hospital in Neuilly. Most of his time in the great city was spent in the Hotel St. Anne, the notorious American military jail run by the sadistic Marine captain, "hard-boiled Smith."

Here now, bitter and disillusioned, Otto continued his rebellion. It led him first to the Garvey movement where he served for a brief period as an officer in Garvey's Black Legion. Then in succession, Wobblies, or Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), the African Blood Brotherhood and finally the Communist Party—joining soon after its unity convention in 1921. After returning from the service, Otto stayed at home only a short time and then moved in with some of his new friends.

Chapter 3

Searching for Answers

Back home in Chicago, I was soon working again as a waiter on the Michigan Central Railroad. As I have already mentioned, the first day of the bloody Chicago race riot (July 28, 1919) came while I was working on the Wolverine run up through Michigan. When I arrived home from work that afternoon, the whole family greeted me emotionally. We were all there except for Otto. The disagreements I had had with my Father in the past were forgotten. Both my Mother and sister were weeping. Everyone was keyed up and had been worrying about my safety in getting from the station to the house.

Following our brief reunion, I tore loose from the family to find out what was happening outside. I went to the Regimental Armory at Thirty-fifth and Giles Avenue because I wanted to find some of my buddies from the regiment. The street, old Forrest Avenue, had recently been renamed in honor of Lt. Giles, a member of our outfit killed in France. I knew they would be planning an armed defense and I wanted to get in on the action. I found them and they told me of their plans. It was rumored that Irishmen from west of the Wentworth Avenue dividing line were planning to invade the ghetto that night, coming in across the tracks by way of Fifty-first Street. We planned a defensive action to meet them.

It was not surprising that defensive preparations were under way. There had been clashes before, often when white youths in "athletic clubs" invaded the Black community. These "clubs" were really racist gangs, organized by city ward heelers and precinct captains.

One of the guys from the regiment took us to the apartment of a friend. It had a good position overlooking Fifty-first Street near State. Someone had brought a Browning submachine gun; he'd gotten it sometime before, most likely from the Regimental Armory. We didn't ask where it had come from, or the origin of the 1903 Springfield rifles (Army issue) that appeared. We set to work mounting the submachine gun and set up watch for the invaders. Fortunately for them, they never arrived and we all returned home in the morning. The following day it rained and the National Guard moved into the Black community, so overt raids by whites did not materialize.

Ours was not the only group which used its recent Army training for self-defense of the Black community. We heard rumors about another group of veterans who set up a similar ambush. On several occasions groups of whites had driven a truck at breakneck speed up south State Street, in the heart of the Black ghetto, with six or seven men in the back firing indiscriminately at the people on the sidewalks.

The Black veterans set up their ambush at Thirty-fifth and State, waiting in a car with the engine running. When the whites on the truck came through, they pulled in behind and opened up with a machine gun. The truck crashed into a telephone pole at Thirty-ninth Street; most of the men in the truck had been shot down and the others fled. Among them were several Chicago police officers—"off duty," of course!

I remember standing before the Angeles Flats on Thirty-fifth and Wabash where the day before four Blacks had been shot by police. It appeared that enraged Blacks had set fire to the building and were attacking some white police officers when the latter fired on them.

Along with other Blacks, I gloated over the mysterious killing of two Black cops with a history of viciousness in the Black community. They had been found dead in an alley between State and Wabash. Undoubtedly they had been killed by Blacks who had taken advantage of the confusion to settle old scores with these

Black enforcers of the white man's law.

Bewilderment and shock struck the Black community as well. I had seen Blacks standing before the burned-out buildings of their former homes, trying to salvage whatever possible. Apparent on their faces was bewilderment and anger.

The Chicago rebellion of 1919 was a pivotal point in my life. Always I had been hot-tempered and never took any insults lying down. This was even more true after the war. I had walked out of a number of jobs because of my refusal to take any crap from anyone. My experiences abroad in the Army and at home with the police left me totally disillusioned about being able to find any solution to the racial problem through the help of the government; for I had seen that official agencies of the country were among the most racist and most dangerous to me and my people.

I began to see that I had to fight; I had to commit myself to struggle against whatever it was that made racism possible. Racism, which erupted in the Chicago riot—and the bombings and terrorist attacks which preceded it—must be eliminated. My spirit was not unique—it was shared by many young Blacks at that time. The returned veterans and other young militants were all fighting back. And there was a lot to fight against. Racism reached a high tide in the summer of 1919. This was the "Red Summer" which involved twenty-six race riots across the country—"red" for the blood that ran in the streets. Chicago was the bloodiest.

The holocaust in Chicago was the worst race riot in the nation's post-war history. But riots took place in such widely separate places as Long View, Texas; Charleston, South Carolina; Elaine, Arkansas; Knoxville, Tennessee, and Omaha, Nebraska. The flareup of racial violence in Omaha, my old home town, followed the Chicago riots by less than two months. It resulted in the lynching of Will Brown, a packing house worker, for an alleged assault on a white woman. When Omaha's mayor, Edward P. Smith, sought to intervene, he was seized by the mob. They were close to hanging the mayor from a trolley pole when police cut the rope and rushed him to a hospital, badly injured.[1]

The common underlying cause of riots in most of the northern cities was the racial tension caused by the migration of tens of thousands of Blacks into these centers and the competition for jobs, housing and the facilities of the city. Rather than being at a temporary peak, this outbreak of racism was more like the rising of a plateau—it never got any higher, but it never really went down, either. Writing in the middle of a riot in Washington, D.C., that summer, the Black poet Claude McKay caught the bitter and belligerent mood of many Blacks:

If we must die, let it not be like hogs
Hunted and penned in an inglorious spot,
While round us bark the mad and hungry dogs,
Making their mock at our accursed lot.
If we must die, O let us nobly die
So that our precious blood may not be shed
In vain; then even the monsters we defy
Shall be constrained to honor us though dead!
O kinsmen! We must meet the common foe!
Though far outnumbered let us show us brave,
And for their thousand blows deal one death blow!
What though before us lies the open grave?
Like men we'll face the murderous, cowardly pack,
Pressed to the wall, dying, but fighting back! [2]

The war and the riots of the "Red Summer" of 1919 left me bitter and frustrated. I felt that I could never again adjust to the situation of Black inequality. But how had it come about? Who was responsible?

Chicago in the early twenties was an ideal place and time for the education of a Black radical. As a result of the migration of Blacks during World War I, the Chicago area came to have the largest concentration of Black proletarians in the country. It was a major point of contact for these masses with the white labor movement and its advanced, radical sector. In the thirties it was to become a main testing ground for Black and white labor unity.

The city itself was the core of a vast urban industrial complex. Sprawling along the southeast shore of Lake Michigan, the area includes five Illinois counties and two in Indiana. The latter contains such industrial towns as East Chicago, Gary and

Hammond. This metropolitan area contains the greatest concentration of heavy industry in the country.

By the second half of the twentieth century, it had forged into the lead of the steel-making industry, surpassing the great Monongahela Valley of Pittsburgh in the production of primary metals; including steel mill, refining and non-ferrous metals operations. There was the gigantic U.S. Steel Corporation in Gary, the Inland Steel Company plant in East Chicago and the U.S. Steel South Works. These are now the three largest steel works in the United States. The steel mills of the Chicago area supply more than 14,000 manufacturing plants.

Chicago was at that time, and remains today, the world's largest railway center. It ranks first in the manufacture of railroad equipment, including freight and passenger cars, Pullmans, locomotives and specialized rolling stock.

The core city itself was most famous for its wholesale slaughter and meat packing industry. Chicago was known as the meat capital of the world, or in Carl Sandburg's more homely terms, "hog butcher for the nation."

The city's colossal wealth was concentrated in the hands of a few men, who comprised the industrial, commercial and financial oligarchy. Among these were such giants as Judge Gary of the mighty U.S. Steel; Cyrus McCormick of International Harvester; the meat packers Philip D. Armour, Gustavus Swift and the Wilson brothers; George Pullman of the Pullman Works; Rosenwald of Montgomery Ward; General Wood of Sears and Roebuck; the "merchant prince" Marshall Field; and Samuel Insull of utilities. These were the real rulers. Ostensible political power rested in the notoriously corrupt, gangster ridden, county political machine headed by Mayor William Hale (Big Bill) Thompson, who carried on the tradition exposed as early as 1903 by Lincoln Steffens in his book, *The Shame of the Cities.*

The glitter and wealth of Chicago's Gold Coast was based on the most inhuman exploitation of the city's largely foreign-born working force. A scathing indictment of the horrible conditions in Chicago's meat packing industry was contained in Upton Sinclair's novel, *The Jungle*, published in 1910. It was inevitable that the wage slave would rebel, that Chicago should become the scene of some of the nation's bloodiest battles in the struggle between labor and capital. The first of these clashes was the railroad strike of 1877 which erupted in pitched battles between strikers and federal troops.

Then in 1886 came the famous Haymarket riot which grew out of a strike for the eight-hour day at the McCormick reaper plant. During a protest rally, a bomb was thrown which killed one policeman and injured six others. This led to the arrest of eight anarchist leaders; four were hanged, one committed suicide or was murdered in his cell, and the others were sentenced to life imprisonment. Obviously being tried and executed simply because they were labor leaders, these innocent men became a *cause célèbre* of international labor. Thousands of visitors made yearly pilgrimages to the city where monuments to the executed men were raised. Haymarket became a rallying word for the eight-hour day. The martyrs were memorialized by the designation of the first of May as International Labor Day.

Several years later the city was the scene of the great Pullman strike led by Eugene V. Debs and his radical but lily-white American Railway Union, which precipitated a nationwide shutdown of railroads in 1894. Again the federal troops were called in and armed clashes between workers and troops ensued. These battles were merely high points in the city's long history of labor radicalism. It was the national center of the early anarcho-socialist movements. In 1905, the Industrial Workers of the World (the IWW or Wobblies) was founded there. The IWW maintained its headquarters and edited its paper, *Solidarity*, there. In 1921, Chicago was to become the site of the founding convention of the Workers (Communist) Party, USA, which maintained its headquarters and the editorial offices of the *Daily Worker* there from 1923 to 1927.

Blacks, however, played little or no role in the turbulent early history of the Chicago labor movement. This was so simply because they were not a part of the industrial labor force. Prior to World War I, Blacks were employed mainly in the domestic or personal service occupations, untouched by labor organizations.

They were not needed in industry where the seemingly endless tide of cheap European immigrant labor—Irish, Scots, English, Swedes, Germans, Poles, East Europeans and Italians—sufficed to fill the city's manpower needs.

The only opportunity Blacks had of entering basic industry was as strikebreakers. Thus, in the early part of the century, Blacks were brought in as strikebreakers on two important occasions; the stockyards strike of 1904 and the city-wide teamsters' strike in 1905. In the first instance, Blacks were discharged as soon as the strike was broken. After the teamsters' strike, a relatively large number of Blacks remained. As a result of the defeat of the 1904 strike, the packing houses remained virtually unorganized for thirteen more years, and the animosities which developed toward the Black strikebreakers became a part of the racial tension of the city.[3]

At the outbreak of World War I, the situation with respect to Chicago's Black labor underwent a basic change. Now Blacks were needed to fill the labor vacuum caused by the war boom and the quotas on foreign immigration. Chicago's employers turned to the South, to the vast and untapped reservoir of Black labor eager to escape the conditions of plantation serfdom—exacerbated by the cotton crisis, the boll weevil plague and the wave of lynchings. The "great migrations" began and continued in successive waves through the sixties.

During the war, the occupational status of Blacks thus shifted from largely personal service to basic industry. In the tens of thousands, Blacks flocked to the stockyards and steel mills. During the war, the Black population went from 50,000 to 100,000. Successive waves of Black migration were to bring the Black population to over a million within the next fifty years. Black labor, getting its first foothold in basic industry during the war, had now become an integral part of Chicago's industrial labor force.[4]

With the tapping of this vast reservoir of cheap and unskilled labor, there was no longer any need for the peasantry of eastern and southern Europe. There was, however, a difference between the position of Blacks and that of the European immigrants. The latter, after a generation or two, could rise to higher skilled and better paying jobs, to administrative and even managerial positions. They were able to leave the ethnic enclaves and disperse throughout the city—to become assimilated into the national melting pot. The Blacks, to the contrary, found themselves permanently relegated to a second-class status in the labor force, with a large group outside as a permanent surplus labor pool to be replenished when necessary from the inexhaustible reservoir of Black, poverty-ridden and land-starved peasantry of the South.

The employers now had in hand a new source of cheap labor, the victims of racist proscription, to use as a weapon against the workers' movement. Indeed, this went hand in hand with the Jim Crow policies of the trade union leaders, who had been largely responsible for keeping Blacks out of basic industry in the first place.

These labor bureaucrats premised their racism on the doctrine of a natural Black inferiority. The theory of an instinctive animosity between the races was a powerful instrument for an anti-union, anti-working class, divide and rule policy. The use of racial differences was found to be a much more effective dividing instrument than the use of cultural and language differences between various white ethnic groups and the native born. As we know, ethnic conflicts proved transient as the various European nationalities became assimilated into the general population. Blacks, on the other hand, remain to this day permanently unassimilable under the present system.

Such were conditions in the days when I undertook my search for answers to the question of Black oppression and the road to liberation. Living conditions were pretty rough then, and I had gone back to my old trade of waiting tables in order to make some sort of living.

But I was restless, moody, short-tempered—qualities ill-suited to the trade. Naturally, I had trouble holding a job. My trouble was not with the guests so much as with my immediate superiors; captains, head waiters and dining car stewards, most of whom were white. In less than a month after the Chicago riot, I lost my job on the Michigan Central as a result of a run-in with an inspector.

The dining car inspectors were a particularly vicious breed. Their job was to see that discipline was maintained and service kept up to par. These inspectors, whom we called company spies, would board the train unexpectedly anywhere along the route, hoping to catch a member of the crew violating some regulation or not giving what they considered proper service. They would then reprimand the guilty party personally, or if the offense was sufficiently serious, would turn him in to the main office to be laid off or fired. Usually the inspector's word was law from which there was no appeal. The dining car crew had no unions in those days.

This particular inspector (his name was McCormick) had taken a dislike to me. He had made that clear on other occasions. The feeling was mutual. Perhaps he sensed my independent attitude. He probably felt I was not sufficiently impressed by him and did not care about my job. He was right on both counts.

He boarded the Chicago-bound train one morning in Detroit. We were serving breakfast. It was just one of those days when everything went wrong. People were lined up at each end of the diner, waiting to be served. Service was slow. The guests were squawking and I was in a mean mood myself. I was cutting bread in the pantry when McCormick peered in and shouted, "Say, Hall, that silver is in terrible condition."

The silver! What the hell is this man talking about dirty silver when I've got all these people out there clamoring for their breakfast.

"I've been noticing you lately," he continued. "It looks as though you don't want to work. If you don't like your job why in hell don't you quit?"

I took that as downright provocation. "Damn you and your job!" I exploded, advancing on him.

He turned pale and ran out of the pantry. A friend of mine in the crew grabbed me by the wrist.

"What the hell's the matter with you, Hall? Are you crazy?" It was only then that I realized that I had been waving the bread knife at the inspector.

In a few minutes, the brakeman and the conductor came into the pantry. McCormick brought up the rear.

"That's the one," he said pointing at me.

Addressing me, the conductor said, "The inspector here says you threatened him with a knife. Is that true?"

I denied it, stating that I had been cutting bread when the argument started and had a knife in my hand. I wasn't threatening him with it. My friend (who had grabbed my wrist) substantiated my story.

"Well," said the conductor, "you'd better get your things and ride to Chicago in the coach. We don't want any more trouble here, and the inspector has said he doesn't want you in the dining car."

I went up forward in the coach. I got off the train in Chicago at Sixty-third and Stony Island. I didn't go to the downtown station, thinking that the cops might be waiting there.

So much for my job with the Michigan Central.

I went back to working sporadically in restaurants, hotels and on trains. I didn't stay anywhere very long. The first job that I regarded as steady was the Illinois Athletic Club, where I remained for several months. I was beginning to settle down a little and participate in the social life of the community, attending dances, parties and visiting cabarets. The Royal Gardens, a night club on Thirty-first Street, was one of my favorite hangouts. King Oliver and Louis Armstrong were often featured there. At the Panama, on Thirty-fifth Street between State and Wabash, we went to see our favorite comedians—Butter Beans and Susie.

It was on one of these occasions that I met my first wife, Hazel. She belonged to Chicago's Black social elite, such as it was. Her father had died and her family was on the downgrade. Her mother was left with four children, three girls and a boy, of whom Hazel was the oldest. The other children were still teenagers, and Hazel and her mother had supported them by doing domestic work and catering for wealthy whites. I was twenty-one and she was twenty-five.

Hazel was attractive, a high school graduate. She spoke good English and, as Mother said, "had good manners." She worked for Montgomery Ward, then owned by the philanthropic Rosenwald family, the first big company to hire Blacks as office clerks. She had a nice singing voice and used to sing around at parties. Her friends were among the Black upper strata and the family belonged to the Episcopal Church on Thirty-eighth and Wabash which at that time was the church of the colored elite. We were married in 1920. I was all decked out in a rented swallowtail coat, striped pants, spats and a derby. The ceremony was impressive. Photos appeared in the *Chicago Defender.*

In a short time, the romance wore off. Hazel's ambition to get ahead in the world, "to be somebody," clashed with my love of freedom. I soon had visions of myself, a quarter century hence—making mortgage payments on a fancy house, installments on furniture, and trapped in a drab, lower middle-class existence, surrounded by a large and quarrelsome family.

The worst of it was having to put up with being kicked around on the job and taking all that crap from headwaiters and captains. I had been working at the Athletic Club for several months before I got married. Then nobody had bothered me. When I asked for time off to get married, the white headwaiter and the captain seemed delighted. "Sure Hall, that's fine. Congratulations. Take a couple of weeks off."

Upon my return, I immediately felt a change in their attitude. Now that I was married, they felt they had me where they wanted me. They became more and more demanding. One day at lunch I had some difficulty getting my orders out of the kitchen, and the guests were complaining—not an unusual occurrence in any restaurant. Instead of helping me out and calming down the guests, or seeing what the hang-up was in the kitchen, the captain started shouting at me in front of the guests. "What's the matter with you, Hall? Why don't you bring these people's orders?"

"Can't you see that I'm tied up in the kitchen?" I said. "Why don't you go out and see the chef instead of hollering at me!"

All puffed up, he yelled out, "Don't give me any of your lip or I'll snatch that badge off you!"

I jerked my badge off, threw both badge and side towel into his face, and shouted, "Take your badge and shove it!"

I was moving on him when a friend of mine, Johnson, a waiter at the next station, jumped between us. I turned away, walked down the steps, through the kitchen and into the dressing room. Johnson followed me into the dressing room a few minutes later. "Hurry up and get out of here. They're calling the cops." I changed and left.

My marriage went down the drain along with the job. That was a period of post-war crisis. Jobs were hard to find, and especially so for me since I had been blacklisted from several places because of my temper. I was no longer the same man that Hazel married, and the truth of the matter was that I wanted it that way. Her hang-ups were typical of Black aspirants for social status—strivers, we called them—who never really doubted the validity of the prejudice from which they suffered. Hazel slavishly accepted white middle class values. I, on the other hand, was looking around trying to figure out how best to maladjust.

MY REBELLION

For me, the break-up of our marriage in the spring of 1920 destroyed my last ties with the old conventional way of life. I was completely disenchanted with the middle class crowd into which Hazel was trying to draw me. But more important, I not only rejected the status quo, I was determined to do something about it—to make my rebellion count.

I sought answers to a number of questions: What was the nature of the forces behind Black subjugation? Who were its main beneficiaries? Why was racism being entrenched in the north in this period? How did it differ from the South? Could the situation be altered and, if so, what were the forces for change and the program?

I renewed my search for a way to go, pressed by a driving need for a world view which would provide a rational explanation of society and a clue to securing Black freedom and dignity. My search was to continue during what must have been the most virulent and widespread racist campaign in U.S. history. The forces of racist bigotry unleashed during the riots of the "Red Summer" of 1919 were still on the march through the twenties. Indeed, they had intensified and extended their campaign.

The whole country seemed gripped in a frenzy of racist hate. Anti-Black propaganda was carried in the press, in magazine articles, literature and in theater. D.W. Griffith's obscene movie, *The Birth of a Nation*, which glorified the Ku Klux Klan and pictured Blacks as depraved animals, was shown to millions.[5] Thomas Dickson's two novels, *The Klansman* (upon which Griffith's picture was based) and *The Leopard's Spots* (an earlier book on the theme of the white man's burden) were best sellers. Racist demagogues of the stripe of "Pitchfork" Ben Tillman of South Carolina, Vardeman of Mississippi, and "Cotton" Ed Smith of South Carolina, were in demand on northern lecture platforms.

Closely behind the trumpeters of race-hate rode their cavalry. A revived Ku Klux Klan now extended to the north and made its appearance in twenty-seven states.[6] This organization, embracing millions, headed the list of a whole rash of super-patriotic groups who were anti-Catholic, anti-Jew, anti-foreign-born and anti-Black. The apostles of white, Anglo-Saxon and Nordic supremacy included in their galaxy of ethnic outcasts Asians (the "yellow peril"), Latin Americans and other foreign-born from southern and eastern Europe. Their hate propaganda pitted Protestants against Catholics, Christians against Jews, native against foreign-born, and all against the Blacks, upon whom was fixed the stigma of inherent and eternal inferiority.

It seemed as though the prophets of the "lost cause" were out to reverse their military defeat at Appomattox by the cultural subversion of the north. That they were receiving encouragement by powerful northern interests was self-evident. Tin Pan Alley added its contribution to the attack with a spate of *Mammy* songs, and along the same vein, "That's Why Darkies Were Born":

Someone had to pick the cotton,
Someone had to plant the corn,
Someone had to slave and be able to sing,
That's why darkies were born.
Though the balance is wrong,
Still your faith must be strong,
Accept your destiny brothers, listen to me.

A main objective of the racist assault was the academic establishment. The old crude forms of racist propaganda proved inadequate in an age of advancing science. The hucksters of race hate conducted raids upon the sciences, especially upon the new disciplines—anthropology, ethnology and psychology—in an attempt to establish a scientific foundation for the race myth.

The new "science of race" evolved and flourished during the period. Spadework for this grotesque growth had been done in the middle of the last century by the Frenchman, Count Arthur D. Gobineau, in his work, *The Inequality of the Human Races* (1851-1853). It was carried on by his disciple, the Englishman turned German, Houston Chamberlain, who asserted that racial mixture was a natural crime. In the U.S., early efforts in this field were the works of Knott and Glidden. Also, there was Ripley's *Races of Mankind.*

Carrying on in this pseudoscientific tradition during the war and postwar years were the popular theorists Lathrop Stoddard, *The Rising Tide of Color: Against White World Supremacy* (1923) and Madison Grant, *The Passing of a Great Race: The Racial Basis of European History* (1916). The cornerstone of this pseudoscientific structure was Social Darwinism which was an attempt to subvert Darwin's theory of evolution and arbitrarily apply natural selection in plant and animal society to human society. Acording to the Social Darwinists, led by Herbert Spencer, the British sociologist, history was a continuous struggle for existence between races. In this struggle, the Nordic, Anglo-Saxon, or Aryan civilizations naturally survived as the fittest.

The racists had a field day in history, long the area in which the heroes of the "lost cause" had their greatest, most effective concentration. They had held chairs in some of the nation's most prestigious universities—Columbia, Johns Hopkins, Harvard, etc. Among such historians was William Archibald Dunning, who during his long tenure at Columbia miseducated generations of students by his distortions of the Reconstruction, Civil War and slave periods.[7]

In the academic world this pseudoscience of racism held sway with only a few open challengers. The latter seemed to be isolated voices in the wilderness, as the counter-offensive was slow in getting underway. In anthropology there was Franz Boaz's anti-racist thrust, *Mind of Primitive Man.* This was written in 1911, and not widely known at the time. The works of his students and colleagues—most notably Melville Hershovitz, *The Myth of the Negro Past*, Jane Weltfish, Ruth Benedict, Margaret Mead and Otto Klineburg—were not to appear until the next decade.

In history, the movement for revision was then decades away. It only became a trend with the Black Revolt of the sixties. Black scholars had pioneered the reexamination: W.E.B. DuBois, his *tour de force, Black Reconstruction*, and the epilogue, "Propaganda of History," which contained a bitter indictment of the white historical establishment, was not to appear until the mid-thirties. J.A. Rogers, popular Black historian, had not yet appeared on the scene. Young Carter Woodson, who had founded his Association for the Study of Negro History in 1915, only began to publish the *Journal of Negro History* in 1916. His own important historical works were yet to come.

Thus, from its tap-roots in the Southern plantation system, the anti-Black virus had spread throughout the country, shaping the pattern of Black-white relationships in the industrial urban north as well. The dogma of the inherent inferiority of Blacks had permeated the national consciousness to become an integral part of the American way of life. Racist dogma, first a rationale for chattel slavery and then plantation peonage, was now carried over to the north as justification for a new system of de facto segregation.

Black subjugation, city-style Jim Crow, became fixed by the twenties, and continues up to the present day. Its components were the residential segregation of the ghetto with its inferior education, slums and the second class status of Black workers in the labor force where they were relegated to the bottom rung of the occupational ladder and prevented by discrimination from moving into better skills and higher paid jobs.

Although its purpose was not clear to me then, I later realized that the virulent racism of the period served to justify and bulwark the structure of Black powerlessness which was developing in every northern city where we had become a sizable portion of the work force.

At the time the racist deluge simply revealed great gaps in my own education and knowledge. I knew that the propaganda was a tissue of lies, but I felt the need for disproving them on the basis of scientific fact. I rejected racism—the lie of the existence in nature of superior and inferior races—and its concomitant fiction of intuitive hostility between races. For one thing, it ran counter to my own background of experience in Omaha.

Religion as an explanation for the riddles of the universe I had rejected long before. I knew that our predicament was not the result of some divine disposition and therefore that racial oppression was neither a spiritual or natural phenomenon. It was created by man, and therefore must be changed by man. How? Well, that was the question to be explored. I had only a smattering of knowledge of natural and social sciences, much of which I had gathered through reading the lectures of Robert G. Ingersoll. It was through him that I discovered Charles Darwin and his theory of evolution through natural selection.

Armed with a dictionary and *a priori* knowledge gleaned from Ingersoll's popularizations, I was able to make my way through *Origin of the Species*. Darwin showed the origin of the species to be a result of the process of evolution and not the mysterious act of a divine creation. Here at last was a scientific refutation of religious dogma. I had at last found a basis for my atheism which had before been based mainly upon practical knowledge.

Continuing my search, I found myself attracted to other social iconoclasts or image-destroyers, and to their attacks upon established beliefs. I remember staying up all night reading Max Nordau's *Conventional Lies of Our Civilization*, being thrilled by his castigation of middle class hypocrisy, prejudices and philistinism. Moving on to the contemporary scene, I discovered H.L. Mencken, "The Sage of Baltimore," and his "smart set" crowd.

For a short while, I was an avid reader of the *Mercury* which he helped to establish in 1920 as a forum for his views. I was particularly delighted by his critical potshots at some of the most sacred cultural cows of what he called "the American Babbitry," "boobocracy," "anthropoid majority"—Menckenian sobriquets for middle class commoners. Mencken enjoyed a brief popularity among young Black radicals of the day who saw in his searing diatribes against WASP cultural idols ammunition with which to blast the claims of white supremacists. The novelty soon wore off as it became clear that Mencken's type of iconoclasm posed no real challenge to the prevailing social structure. In fact, it was reactionary. He sought to replace destroyed idols with even more reactionary ones, as I soon found out.

Mencken's philosophical mentor was none other than the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, prophet of the superman, of the aristocratic minority destined to rule over the unenlightened hoardes of *Untermenschen*—the "perenially and inherently unequal majority of mankind." Most Blacks then, including myself, who flirted with Mencken never accepted him fully. The one exception was George Schuyler of the *Pittsburgh Courier*, who took Mencken's snobbery and reactionary politics and made a career of them which has lasted for forty years.

What confused me most were the contentions of the Social Darwinists, who claimed to be the authentic continuators of Darwin's theories. Darwin had not dealt with the question of race *per se*. But it had seemed to me that his theory of evolution precluded the myth of race. How could Darwin's theory which had helped me finally and irrevocably throw aside the veil of mysticism and put the understanding of the descent of man within my grasp—how could this be used as an endorsement of racism? Perhaps I had been wrong? Was I reading into Darwin more than what he implied?

It was my brother Otto who finally cleared me up on this point. He and I were running in different circles, but we would meet from time to time and exchange notes. Otto pointed out that Social Darwinists had distorted Darwin by mechanically transferring the laws of existence among plants and animals to the field of social and human relations. Human society had its own laws, he asserted. Ah, what were those laws? That was the subject that I wanted to explore.

"You ought to quit reading those bourgeois authors and start reading Marx and Engels," Otto told me, suggesting also that I read Henry Lewis Morgan's *Ancient Society* and the works of Redpath.

About this time I got a job as a clerk at the Chicago Post Office. I heard that jobs were available and that veterans were given preference. Following the advice of friends, I approached S.L. Jackson of the Wabash Avenue YMCA, who at that time was a Black Republican stalwart with connections in the Madden political machine.[8] Jackson gave me a note to some Post Office official in charge of employment. I passed the civil service examination, in which veterans were given a ten percent advantage, and was employed as a substitute clerk.

The Post Office job in those days carried considerable prestige. It was almost the only clerical job open to Blacks. Postal workers, along with waiters, Pullman porters and tradesmen, were traditionally considered a part of the Black middle class. A number of prominent community leaders came from this group. Many officers of the old Eighth Illinois were postal employees, a good percentage of them mail-carriers.

The Post Office became a refuge for poor Black students and unemployed university graduates. For some of the latter it was a sort of way-station on the road to their professional careers. Others remained, settling for regular Post Office careers. But even here opportunities were limited. Blacks held only a few supervisory positions, as advancement depended solely on the discretion of the white postmaster.

On the job I found the work extremely boring. It consisted of standing before a case eight hours a night, sorting mail. All substitutes were relegated to the night shift. It took years to get on the day shift which was preempted by the veteran employees. On the other hand, I found the company of my new young fellow workers very stimulating.

In those days the organization of Black postal employees was the Phalanx Forum. Before the war, the organization had played an important political and social role in the community. It was dominated by the conservative crowd of social climbers and political aspirants, who were the most active group among postal employees and had close ties with the local Republican machine. Their leadership was completely ineffective with respect to the job issues of Black rank-and-file employees, and it had little or no influence over the younger group of new employees, which included many veterans and students. The gap between the old, conservative crowd and the new, youthful element was sharp. Among the latter a radical sentiment was growing.

I was immediately attracted to this group among whom I was to find friends who seemed to be impelled by the same motivations as myself—to find new answers to the problems afflicting our people. Most of those with whom I fraternized considered the postal job as temporary, a step to other careers. Our interest at the time, therefore, was not so much with the immediate economic or on-the-job needs of Black postal workers, but with the "race problem" generally. The drive for unionization of postal employees was to come later.[9]

The issue to which we addressed ourselves was the current campaign of white racist propaganda: how to counter it on the basis of scientific truth. We saw the network of racist lies as clearly aimed at justifying Black subjugation and destroying our dignity as a people. On this question we had long, endless discussions on the job while sorting mail, at rest, during lunch breaks and on Sundays when some of us would meet. I soon identified with what I considered the more vocal segment. Among our group of aspirant intellectuals there was a medical student, a couple of law students, a dentist (whom we all called "Doc"), students of education and some intellectually oriented workers like myself. On one Sunday when we had gathered, it was suggested, I think by Joe Mabley, that we organize ourselves as an informal discussion group, and that our purpose would be to answer the racist lies on the basis of scientific truth. The idea was instantly agreed upon.

The discussion circle was loosely organized, not more than a dozen participants in all, and bent on finding answers. The moving spirits of the group were John Heath, Joe Mabley and "Doc."

Heath was a tall, light-complexioned man with high cheekbones. He was a graduate student in the field of education, and a man whose sterling character and keen intellect we all respected.

Then there was Joe Mabley, a brilliant, small Black man. He had large velvety eyes and was a college dropout. He was married and had a family—two or three children—and had settled down to a regular Post Office job. He and Doc were the only regular postal workers in our group—the rest of us being substitutes. Doc had set up an office on the Southside and was trying hard to build up a clientele while working night shifts.

Originally we had planned to meet every Sunday at noon as the most convenient time for the fellows on our shift. The meeting places were to alternate between the homes or apartments of the members. When we got to procedure, the group would choose a topic of discussion and ask for volunteers or assign a member to make introductory reports. He would then have a week to prepare the report. Our original plans included the eventual organization of a forum in which the issues of the day could be debated, and the holding of social affairs. All of this proved to be too ambitious. We found it impractical to have weekly meetings and finally agreed that twice a month was more feasible. The forum idea never got off the ground.

Among us I think we had most of the answers on the question of race, that is, to all but the big lie, the one that was most convincing to the white masses and is the cornerstone on which the whole structure stood or fell: the assertion that *Blacks have no history.*

A leading formulator of the lie at that time was John Burgess, professor of political science and history at Columbia University:

> The claim that there is nothing in the color of the skin from the point of view of political ethics is a great sophism. A black skin means membership in a race of men which has never of itself succeeded in subjecting passion to reason, has never, therefore, created any civilization of any kind.[10]

We wanted to refute the slanders on the basis of scientific truth. For this, we needed more ammunition and better weapons, particularly in the field of history. It was about this time that I met George Wells Parker, a brilliant young Black graduate student from Omaha's Creighton University. I was introduced to him by my brother Otto, who had known him in Omaha. He was in

Chicago to visit relatives and to conduct research for his dissertation. His major was history, I believe. We found him a virtual storehouse of knowledge on the race question, especially Black history. His major objective in life was apparently to refute the prevalent racist lies and to build Black dignity and pride. He possessed wide knowledge and seemed to have read everything.

Parker called our attention to the writings of the great anthropologist Franz Boas; the Egyptologist Virchow; to Max Mueller (philologist who formulated the Aryan myth and then rejected it); to the Frenchman Jean Finot; to Sir Harry Johnstone (British authority on African history); and to the Italian Giuseppe Serg and his theory of the Mediterranean races, a refutation of the Aryan mythology. Proponents of this myth claimed all civilizations—Indian, Near East, Egyptians—as Aryan. One wonders why the Chinese were left out, but then that would have been too palpable a fraud! It was Parker who called our attention to Herodotus (ancient Greek historian) who had described the Egyptians of his time (around 400 B.C.) as "Black and with woolly hair."

Otto and I introduced Parker to friends and acquaintances, and I, of course, to our discussion circle. He spoke before numerous groups. Everywhere there was hunger for his knowledge. We even brought him before the Bugs Club Forum in Washington Park, where he led a discussion on the race question.

This brilliant young man returned to Omaha to resume his studies. The next winter he was dead. We heard it was the result of a mental breakdown. Thus was a brilliant career cut short and a potentially great scholar lost. Surviving, I believe, was only one brief paper and some notes.

GARVEY'S BACK TO AFRICA MOVEMENT

But time and tide did not stand still to wait for our answers to the social problems of the day, or for the results of our intellectual researches. While we sought arguments with which to counter the racist thrust, the masses were forging their own weapons. Their growing resistance was finally to erupt on the political scene in the greatest mass movement of Blacks since Reconstruction.

Great masses of Blacks found the answer in the Back to Africa program of the West Indian Marcus Garvey. Under his aegis this movement was eventually diverted from the enemy at home into utopian Zionistic channels of peaceful return to Africa and the establishment of a Black state in the ancestral land.

The organizational course of the movement was Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). He first launched this organization in Jamaica, British West Indies, in 1914. Coming to the USA, he founded its first section in New York City in 1917. The organization grew rapidly during the war and the immediate post-war period. At its height in the early twenties, it claimed a membership of half a million. While estimates of the organization's membership vary—from half a million to a million—it was the largest organization in the history of U.S. Blacks. There can be no doubt that its influence extended to millions who identified wholly or partially with its programs.

What in Garvey's program attracted these masses?

Garvey was a charismatic leader and in that tradition best articulated the sentiments and yearnings of the masses of Black people. In his UNIA he also created the vehicle for their organization. Equally important, he was a master at understanding how to use pageantry, ritual and ceremony to provide the Black peasantry with psychological relief from the daily burdens of their oppression. His apparatus included such high sounding titles as potentate, supreme deputy potentate, knights of the Nile, knights of distinguished service, the order of Ethiopia, the dukes of Nigeria and Uganda. There were Black gods and Black angels and a flag of black, red and green: "Black for the race, Red for their blood and Green for their hopes."

The movement's program was fully outlined in the historic Declaration of Rights of the Negro Peoples of the World, adopted at the first convention of the organization in New York City August 13, 1920. In the manner of the Nation of Islam and its publication *Muhammad Speaks (Bilalian News)*, the program of Garvey combined a realistic assessment of the conditions facing

Blacks with a fantasy and mystification about the solution. Along with the Back to Africa slogan, the document contained a devastating indictment of the plight of the Black peoples in the United States. Expressing the militancy of its delegates, it called for opposition to the inequality of wages between Blacks and whites, it protested their exclusion from unions, their deprivation of land, taxation without representation, unjust military service, and Jim Crow laws.

Anticipating the Black Power Revolt of the sixties, the document called for "complete control of our social institutions without the interference of any other race or races." Reflecting the rising worldwide anti-colonial movement of the period, it called for self-determination of peoples and repudiated the loosely formed League of Nations, declaring its decisions "null and void as far as the Blacks were concerned because it seeks to deprive them of their independence." This latter point was in reference to the assignment of mandates to European powers over African territories wrested from the Germans.

Through this atmosphere of militancy, expressing the desire of the masses to defend their rights at home, ran the incongruent theme of Back to Africa. Declared Garvey:

> Being satisfied to drink of the dregs from the cup of human progress will not demonstrate our fitness as a people to exist alongside others, but when of our own initiative we strike out to build industries, governments, and ultimately empires (sic), then and only then, will we as a race prove to our Creator and to man in general that we are fit to survive and capable of shaping our own destiny.
>
> Wake up, Africa! Let us work toward the one glorious end of a free, redeemed, and mighty nation. Let Africa be a bright star among the constellation of nations.[11]

Who were Garvey's followers?

Garvey's Zionistic message was beamed mainly to the submerged Black peasantry, especially its uprooted vanguard, the new migrants in such industrial centers as New York City, Cleveland, Detroit, Chicago and St. Louis. These masses made up the rank and file of the movement. They were embittered and disillusioned by racist terror and unemployment, and saw in Garvey's program of Back to Africa the fulfillment of their yearnings for land and freedom to be guaranteed by a government of their own.

On the other hand, Garveyism was the trend of a section of the ghetto lower middle classes, small businessmen, shopkeepers, property holders who were pushed to the wall, ruined or threatened with ruin by the ravages of the post-war crisis. Also attracted to Garveyism were the frustrated and unemployed Black intelligentsia: professionals, doctors, lawyers with impoverished clientele, storefront preachers who had followed their flocks to the promised land of the north, and poverty stricken students.

Garveyism reflected the desperation of these strata before the ruthless encroachments of predatory white corporate interests upon their already meager markets. It reflected an attempt by them to escape from the sharpening racist oppression, the terror of race riots, the lynchings, economic and social frustrations. It was from these strata that the movement drew its leadership cadres.

The immediate pecuniary interests of this element were expressed in the form of ghetto enterprises, the organization of a whole network of cooperative enterprises, including grocery stores, laundries, restaurants, hotels and printing plants. The most ambitious was the Black Star Steamship Line. Several ships were purchased and trade relations were established with groups in the West Indies and Africa, including the Republic of Liberia.

The New York City division comprised a large segment of the intensely nationalistic West Indian immigrants. West Indians were prominent in the leadership, in Garvey's close coterie, and in the organization's inner councils. There can be no doubt of the considerable influence of this element on the organization. But the attempt on the part of some writers to brand the movement as a foreign import with no indigenous roots is superficial and without foundation in fact. It is clear that Garveyism had both a social and economic base in Black society of the twenties. Nor was Garvey's nationalism a new trend among Blacks—nationalist currents had repeatedly emerged, going back even before the Civil War.[12]

A key role in the movement was also played by deeply disillusioned Black veterans who had fought an illusory battle to "make the world safe for democracy" only to return to continued and even harsher slavery. Veterans were involved in the setting up of the skeleton army for the future African state, and in such paramilitary organizations as the Universal African Legion, the Universal Black Cross Nurses, the African Motor Corps and the Black Eagle Flying Corps. Many Black radicals—even some socialistically inclined—were swept into the Garvey movement, attracted by its militancy.

Despite his hostility toward local communists, Garvey seemed to regard the Soviet experience with some favor—at least in the early years of his movement. This probably reflected the sentiments of many of his followers. As late as 1924, in an editorial in the *Negro World*, he publicly mourned the passing of Lenin, the founder of the Soviet Union, calling him "probably the world's greatest man between 1917 and ...1924." On that occasion, he sent a cable to Moscow "expressing the sorrow and condolence of the 400,000,000 Negroes of the world."[13]

The Garvey movement revealed the wide rift between the policies of the traditional upper class of the NAACP and associates, and the life needs of the sorely oppressed people. It represented a mass rejection of the policies and programs of this leadership, which during the war had built up false hopes and now offered no tangible proposals for meeting the rampant anti-Black violence and joblessness of the post-war period. This mood was expressed by Garvey, who denounced the whole upper class leadership, claiming that they were motivated solely by the drive for assimilation and banked their hopes for equality on the support of whites—all classes of whom, he contended, were the Black man's enemy. The policy of this leadership, he maintained, was a policy of compromise.

It was in these conditions that Garvey, as the spokesman for the new ghetto petty bourgeoisie, seized leadership of the incipient Black revolt and diverted it into the blind alley of utopian escapism.

My contact with the movement was limited. I had never seen Garvey. I had missed his appearance in 1919 at the Eighth

Regiment Armory. I never visited the organization's Liberty Hall headquarters. In Chicago, the movement seemed to spring up overnight. I first took serious notice of it in 1920. I listened to its orators on street corners, watched its spectacular parades through the Southside streets. The black, red and green flag of the movement was carried at the head of the parade. The parades were lively and snappy; marching were the African Legion and the Universal Black Cross Nurses in their spotless white uniforms and white veils. All marched in step with a band. It was quite impressive, but to me it was unreal and had little or no relevance to the actual problems that confronted Blacks.

From the first, the Garvey movement met heavy opposition in Chicago. The powerful *Chicago Defender*, edited by Robert S. Abbott, took the lead. If not the world's greatest weekly as its masthead proclaimed, it had great influence among Chicago and Southern Blacks, due to its role in promoting the migration to the north. It was widely read in the South where a daily newspaper of Athens, Georgia, called it "the greatest disturbing element that has yet entered Georgia."[14] *The Defender* was relentless in its attack, throwing scorn and contempt on the movement and Garvey himself.

In addition to *The Defender's* attacks, the so-called Abyssinia Affair in the summer of 1920 served to discredit the movement. The Star Order of Ethiopia and Ethiopian Missionaries to Abyssinia was an extremist split off from Chicago's UNIA branch. The leaders of the group held a parade and rally on Thirty-fifth and Indiana. Speakers clad in loud African costume called upon the crowd to return to their African ancestral land.

To show their scorn for the U.S., they burned an American flag, and when white policemen sought to intervene, the Abyssinians shot and killed two white men and wounded a third. This incident was blown up in the white press as an armed rebellion of Blacks. It was condemned on all sides in the Black community and by its leaders, including the editors of *The Defender*, who helped authorities in capturing the Abyssinian dissidents.

Despite its repudiation by the official Garvey organization, the Abyssinian affair served to muddy the Garvey image in Chicago. I was working on the New York Central at the time and heard a graphic account of the affair from my aunts when I arrived in town the next day. They lived right around the corner on Indiana Avenue.

Despite the hostile Black press and the Abyssinian affair, the UNIA grew. At its height, it claimed a Chicago membership of 9,000 devoted followers. This is probably exaggerated, but there is no doubt that the sympathizers numbered in the tens of thousands.

Our Sunday discussion group underestimated the significance of the Garvey movement and the strength it was later to reveal. We regarded it as a transient phenomenon. We applauded some of the cultural aspects of the movement—Garvey's emphasis on race pride, dignity, self-reliance, his exultation of things Black. This was all to the good, we felt. However, we rejected in its entirety the Back to Africa program as fantastic, unreal and a dangerous diversion which could only lead to desertion of the struggle for our rights in the USA. This was our country, we strongly felt, and Blacks should not waive their just claims to equality and justice in the land to whose wealth and greatness we and our forefathers had made such great contributions.

Finally, we could not go along with Garvey's idea about inherent racial antagonisms between Black and white. This to us seemed equivalent to ceding the racist enemy one of his main points. While it is true that I personally often wavered in the direction of race against race, I was not prepared to accept the idea as a philosophy. It did not jibe with my experience with whites.

While rejecting Garvey's program, our ideas for a viable alternative were still vague and unformed. The most important effect the Garvey movement had on us was that it put into clear focus the questions to which we sought answers.

Who were the enemies of the Black freedom struggle? While Garvey claimed the entire white race was the enemy, it did not escape us that he was inconsistent, being soft on white capitalists. His main target was clearly white labor and the trade union movement. According to Garvey:

> It seems strange and a paradox, but the only convenient friend the Negro worker or laborer has, in America, at the

> present time, is the white capitalist. The capitalist being selfish—seeking only the largest profit out of labor—is willing and glad to use Negro labor wherever possible on a scale "reasonably" below the standard white union wage....but, if the Negro unionizes himself to the level of the white worker... the choice and preference of employment is given to the white worker....
>
> If the Negro takes my advice he will organize by himself and always keep his scale of wage a little lower than the whites until he is able to become, through proper leadership, his own employer; by doing so he will keep the good will of the white employer and live a little longer under the present scheme of things.[15]

There is no doubt that Garvey was voicing the sentiments of the vast mass of new migrant workers. And it was not that we had any compunction about strikebreaking in industries from which Blacks were barred. In fact, that had been one of the ways Blacks broke into industries such as stockyards and steel. We were also keenly aware of the Jim Crow policies of the existing trade union leadership and of the anti-Black prejudices rampant among white workers. But in casting Blacks permanently into the role of strikebreakers, Garvey was helping to further divide an already polarized situation and playing into the hands of businessmen, bankers, factory owners and the reactionary leadership of the trade unions.

My own experience with unions in the waiters' trade was bad. Old waiters would tell us how in the first part of the century they had listened to the siren call of white union leaders. They had gone out on strike, ostensibly to better their conditions, only to find their jobs immediately taken by whites. This had been quite a serious blow because at that time, Black waiters had had jobs in most of the best hotels and in a number of fine restaurants. It is therefore understandable that in 1920, we Black waiters felt not the slightest pang of conscience in taking over the jobs of white waiters on strike at the Marygold Gardens (the old Bismark Gardens) on the Northside, one of the swankiest night spots in Chicago. It was also probably the best waiter's job in town; in fact, so good that some of the German captains who remained on the job used to drive to and from work in Cadillacs. The strike was broken after several months, and Blacks were turned out.

Strikebreaking to me was not a philosophy or principle as Garvey contended, but an expedient forced upon Blacks by the Jim Crow policies of the bosses and the unions.

Even as Garvey was putting forward such views, times were beginning to change. Large numbers of Blacks had been brought into industry during the war and had joined unions, especially in steel and the packing houses. A new industrial unionism was developing and raising the slogan of Black and white labor unity.

My sister Eppa's experiences in 1919 at Swift Packing Company were a case in point. She was one of the first Black women to join the union during the organizing drive of the Stockyards Labor Council, which was headed by two communists—William Z. Foster and Jack Johnstone. The drive was supported by John Fitzpatrick, chairman of the Chicago Federation of Labor and a bitter foe of the Jim Crow machine of Samuel Gompers' AFL. Despite inevitable racial tensions fostered by the employers, Eppa had seen the basic unity of interest between all workers and felt strongly that the union was the best place to fight for the interests of Black workers.

In looking back at our study of the Garvey movement, it must be evaluated in light of the fact that it was our first confrontation with nationalism as a mass movement. Our mistake, which I was to find out later through my own experience and study of nationalist movements, resulted from the failure to understand the contradictory nature of the nationalism of oppressed peoples. This contradiction or dualism was inherent in the inter-class character of these movements once they assume a popular mass form.

They comprise various classes and social groupings with conflicting interests, tendencies and motives, all gathered under the unifying banner of national liberation, each with its own concept of that goal and how it should be attained. These conflicts, at first submerged, surface as the movement develops.

They are expressed in two main currents (tendencies) within the movement. First of all, there is the nationalism which reflects the interests of the basic masses—workers and peasants—determined to fight for liberation against the oppressor of the nation. Then there is the nationalism of the Black bourgeoisie who, while at time in conflict with the white oppressors, tend toward compromise and accommodation to protect their own weak position.

From the very beginning this dualism was reflected in the Garvey movement. A highly vocal and aggressively dominant current within the movement was the drive of the small business, professional and intellectual elements for a Black controlled economy. They sought fulfillment of this goal through withdrawal to Africa where they envisioned establishment of their own state, their right to exploit their own masses free from the overwhelming competition of dominant white capital. (A historical example of this can be seen in Liberia.) They thought they could accomplish this, presumably with the acquiescence of the American white rulers, and even the active support of some.

On the other hand, there was a grass-roots nationalism of the masses, the uprooted, dispossessed soil-tillers of the South; their poverty-ridden counterparts in the slum ghettoes of the cities. These masses saw in the Black nationalist state fulfillment of their age-old yearnings for land, equality and freedom through power in their own hands to guarantee and protect these freedoms. It was this indigenous, potentially revolutionary nationalism that Garvey diverted with his Back to Africa slogan.

We failed to recognize the objective conflict of interests between these class components of the movement, equating the social and political aims of the ghetto nationalists, the bourgeoisie, to that of the masses—condemning the whole as reactionary, escapist and utopian.

These were the internal contradictions upon which the movement was to flounder and finally collapse. They were brought to a head by the subsiding of the post-war economic depression, the ushering in of the "boom," and subsequent easing of the plight of Blacks, the partial adjustment of migrants to their new environment and their partial absorption into industry.

The main contradiction inherent in the Garvey movement from its very beginning had been the conflict between the needs of the masses to defend and advance their rights in the USA and the fantastic Back to Africa schemes of the Garvey leadership. Garvey's emphasis on these fantastic schemes reflected his resolution of the conflict in favor of business interests and against the interests of the masses. The resources and energy of the organization were increasingly diverted to support racial business enterprises such as the Black Star Line and the Negro Factories Corporation. The concentration on selling stock for the Black Star Steamship Line by the UNIA leadership from 1921 on neglected the immediate needs of the masses and began to erode the base of support.

Furthermore, Garvey's response to the crisis in the movement exposed the dangerously reactionary logic of a program based upon complete separation of the races and its acceptance of the white racist doctrine of natural racial incompatibility. Pursuing the logic of this idea against the backdrop of the organization's decline inevitably drove Garvey into an alliance of expediency with the most rabid segregationists and race bigots of the period.

Thus, in 1922, Garvey sought the support of Edward Young Clark, the imperial giant of the Ku Klux Klan. This "meeting of the minds" between Garvey and the Klan was not fortuitous. It was an open secret that it took place on the basis of Garvey's agreement to soft-pedal the struggle for equality in the U.S. in return for help in the settlement of Blacks in Africa. This ideological kinship arose from the mutual acceptance of the racist dogma of natural incompatibility of races, race purity and so forth.

In 1924 Garvey went so far seeking support for his Back to Africa program as to invite John Powell, organizer of the Anglo-Saxon Clubs, and other prominent racists to speak at UNIA headquarters. Garvey also publicly praised the KKK. According to W.E.B. DuBois, the Klan issued circulars defending Garvey and declared that the opposition to him was from the Catholic Church.[16] In the late thirties, Senator Bilbo of Mississippi introduced a bill to deport thirteen million Blacks to Africa and received the support of the remnants of the Garvey organization.

The final curtain was to drop on the Garvey episode with the failure of the Black Star Line. The movement was torn by factionalism and splits, with some of the leadership and remaining rank and file demanding that the domestic fight for equal rights be emphasized over the Back to Africa scheme of Garvey. The internal struggle drove many out of the organization and others into a multitude of splinter groups, each a variation of Garveyism itself. Taking advantage of this disarray, the government moved in.

In 1925, Garvey was framed on charges of using the mail to defraud in connection with the sale of stocks for the Black Star Line and was sent to the Atlanta federal prison for two years. He was deported to the West Indies upon release from prison. This debacle marked the end of Garveyism as an important mass movement, although the offshoots continued to exist in numbers of smaller groups advocating Garvey's theory.

At the time, I had taken Garvey's peculiar brand as representing nationalism in general and had simply rejected the whole ideology as a foreign import with no roots in the conditions of U.S. Blacks. Seeing only the negative features of nationalism in the UNIA, I was blind to the progressive and potentially revolutionary aspects which were to prove so important in my own later development.

Thus, the great movement that Garvey built passed into history. But nationalism, as a mass trend, persisted in the Black freedom struggle. Existing side by side with the assimilationist trend, it was eclipsed by the latter in so-called normal times while flaring up in times of stress and crisis.

The Garvey movement was the U.S. counterpart of the vast upsurge of national and colonial liberation struggles which swept the world during the war and post-war period. In this period, masses of Blacks had come to consider themselves as an oppressed nation. Garvey's ability to capture leadership of this nationalist upsurge by default was the result of the immaturity of the revolutionary forces, Black and white. The collapse of the Garvey movement proved conclusively that the petty bourgeois ghetto nationalist current, left to itself, led only to a hopeless blind alley. Unfortunately the forces which could give Black nationalism revolutionary content and direction were only in the process of formation.

The Black working class and its spokesmen had not yet arrived on the scene as an independent force in the Black community and, therefore, was not capable of challenging either the assimilationist leadership of the NAACP or the ghetto nationalism of Garvey. Its counterparts among radical, class-conscious white labor were waging an uphill fight against the Jim Crow-minded AFL bureaucracy led by the Gompers machine. These radical sections of white labor were not yet clear as to the significance of the Black freedom struggle as a revolutionary force in its own right and regarded it simply as a part of the general labor question. Coalescence of these two forces was then a decade away, destined not to take place until the crisis of the thirties.

The preceding analysis is hindsight. I didn't realize the significance of Garvey's movement until a few years later, when, as a student in Moscow, I was assigned to a commission to prepare a resolution on the Negro question in the USA for the Sixth Congress of the Communist International in 1928. It was in the course of these discussions that I came to the recognition of nationalism as an authentic and potentially revolutionary trend in the movement.

The assimilationist programs of the NAACP had been easy to reject. Garvey was somewhat more difficult. But while the Garvey movement was forcing me to a consideration of nationalism (which at the time I also rejected) I could not help but notice the other political developments of the period.

Most conspicuous was the concerted and vicious attack being carried out against white radicals and the trade union movement. The same forces appeared to be behind the Palmer raids of 1919 and 1920, behind the wave of racism and behind the violent union and strike busting which took place. The foreigners who were being deported, the radicals who were imprisoned and the workers throughout the country who were attacked by Pinkerton "private armies," were white as well as Black. In Chicago, the strikes at the stockyards and the steel mills in the area particularly attracted my attention.

For me, the Garvey movement, the racists' assault and the attacks on labor and the radical movement sharpened my political perceptions. The racial fog lifted and the face and location of the enemy was clearly outlined. I began to see that the main beneficiaries of Black subjugation also profited from the social oppression of poor whites, native and foreign-born.

The enemy was those who controlled and manipulated the levers of power; they were the super-rich, white moneyed interests who owned the nation's factories and banks, and thus controlled its wealth. They were known by many names: the corporate elite; the industrial, financial (and robber) barons; etc. Chicago was the home base of a significant segment of this ruling class. Here the chain of command was clear: on the political side, it extended from city hall down to the lowliest wardheeler and precinct captain and was tied in at all levels with organized crime. On the economic side, it was represented by such employer organizations as the Chicago Chamber of Commerce, by trade associations and by top management in the giant industrial plants, railroads, big commercial establishments, banks, utilities and insurance firms. Their chain of command extended down to the foremen and department heads, and on-the-job supervisors. These levers of power also controlled education, the media, the arts and all law enforcement agencies, both military and police. At the bottom of this pyramid and bearing its weight were the working people who toiled in the steel mills, the packing plants, the railway yards, and the thousands of other sweatshops. Lowliest among these were the Blacks, pushed to the very bottom by the "divide and rule" policy of the corporate giants and their henchmen, and the complimentary Jim Crow policies and practices of the AFL trade union bureaucracy.

PASSAGES

Our postal discussion circle, which had held together scarcely three months, was breaking up. Heath, our chairman and recognized leader, was leaving. He had played the greatest role in keeping the group together. Now he had taken a job at some college in Virginia, his native state.

Differences had already developed in the group, and with Heath gone, the possibilities for reconciling them seemed slim. These differences, as I recall, were not of a political or ideological nature. They were seldom expressed in the open, but were reflected in the opposition of some members to proposals for enlarging the group and moving it into the outside political arena. This opposition evidently reflected the desire of some members to retain the group as a narrow discussion circle with membership restricted by tacit understanding to those whom they considered their intellectual peers. It seemed to me they sought to reduce it to a sort of elitist mutual admiration society. As a result of this sectarian attitude, the group hardly grew beyond its original membership of a dozen or so.

There was no doubt, though, that our association had been mutually beneficial. All of us had grown in political understanding and awareness. But up to the time of Heath's departure, we had advanced no program for putting our newly acquired political understanding into practice. Our original plans for the organization of a forum to debate the issues of the day never got off the ground. We had not developed a program for involvement in the struggles of the community, nor, for that matter, in the immediate on-the-job problems of Black postal employees. We never even got around to deciding on a name for the group. One suggestion, that we call ourselves the "New Negro Forum," was never acted upon.

Heath, Mabley, Doc and myself were beginning to feel the pull from the outside, the need for a broader political arena of activity, to play a more active role in the community. We were the ones who most often attended radical forums and lectures and kept abreast of what was going on in the Southside community. We often went to the Bugs Club in Washington Park (Chicago's equivalent of London's Hyde Park), and the Dill Pickle Club on the Northside which was run by the anarchist Jack Jones.

Heath had gone. Mabley refused the chairmanship, pleading that he was tied down by his family and could not take on additional responsibilities. Doc refused to accept the honor; he was similarly tied down by his job and dental practice. But the real reason for their refusal, which they were to confide to me later, was that they had lost confidence in the group. Without Heath, they saw no future role for it. Like myself, they were attracted to the broader movement. I also declined, giving as my excuse that I was quitting the Post Office in a few days and was going back to my old job on the railroad. A chairman pro-tem was chosen; I don't remember who.

I continued my reading along the lines which Otto had suggested. Among the books I read were Henry Morgan's *Ancient Society* (which Engels had used as the basis for *Origins of the Family),* Gustavus Meyer's *History of the Great American Fortunes,* John Reed's *Ten Days That Shook the World* and Jack London's *The Iron Heel.*

I also kept abreast of world events, reading about Lenin and Trotsky in revolutionary Russia. I followed the post-war colonial rebellions of Sun Yat-sen's China, Gandhi in India, Ataturk in Turkey, the rebellion of the Riff tribes in Morocco led by Abdul Krim. There were rumblings in black Africa—strikes and demonstrations against colonial oppression. One heard such names as Kadelli and Gumede of the South African National Congress, and of Sandino in Nicaragua who fought the U.S. Marines for many years.

My feet were getting itchy. I was fed up with the Post Office and the excruciatingly monotonous nature of the work. At the same time, the night shift cramped my social life as well as my growing need for broader political activity. I quit the job without regret.

Soon after, I started work as a waiter on the Santa Fe's Chief, the company's crack train running to Los Angeles. It was an eight-day run: three days to the coast, with a two-day layover in Los Angeles and three days back. Our crew would make three trips a month, and a layover one trip (eight days) in Chicago. This schedule gave me approximately twelve free days a month in Chicago—time enough for both political and social life. It was a hard job, but good money for those days and exciting after the drab routine of the Post Office.

Los Angeles, "Sweet Los," as we used to call it. The Santa Fe boys, all "big spenders," were very popular with the girls. A bevy would show up to meet us at the station every trip.

I was to remain on that run three years, which up to that time was the longest I had ever remained on one job. Upon my return from the first trip, I called Mabley and he informed me that he thought the discussion circle had dissolved. Only one or two guys showed up at the next scheduled meeting, and the pro-tem chairman himself was absent. It was dead.

My political development continued nevertheless. The runs on the Santa Fe gave ample time for discussion with my fellow crew members. Most of them, though somewhat older, were as aware as those at the Post Office with whom I had worked. I also continued to read, now studying *The Communist Manifesto,* Engels' *Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State,* and Marx's *Value, Price and Profit.*

The first stage of my political search was near an end. In the years since I had mustered out of the Army, I had come from being a disgruntled Black ex-soldier to being a self-conscious revolutionary looking for an organization with which to make revolution.

For three years I had listened in lecture halls, at rallies and in Washington Park to a spate of orators each claiming to meet the challenge of the times. They included the great "people's lawyer" Clarence Darrow; Judge Fisher of the reform movement; the socialist leader Victor Berger and sundry other members of his party; the anarchist Ben Reichman; Ben Fletcher, the Black IWW orator and organizer; and assorted Garveyites. Although some had their points—for example, the fighting spirit and sincerity of the IWW impressed me—I rejected them all.

In the spring of 1922, I approached my brother Otto, whom I knew had joined the Workers (Communist) Party shortly after its inception in 1921. I told him that I wanted to join the Party.

The fact that Otto was in the Party and had advised me from time to time on my reading had undoubtedly influenced my decision. I had a generally favorable impression of the Black communists I knew; men like Otto, the Owens brothers and Edward Doty. I was also impressed by whites like Jim Early, Sam Hammersmark, Robert Minor and his wife, Lydia Gibson. What added great weight to my favorable impression of the communists, however, was their political identity with the successful Bolshevik Revolution.

At the time it happened, I had been taken totally unaware of its significance. I first heard of it during an incident that occurred in France in August 1918. My regiment, while marching into positions on the Soissons sector, had paused for a rest. On one side of the road there was a high barbed wire fence and behind it loitered groups of soldiers in strange uniforms. Upon closer observation, it became clear that they were prisoners. They spoke in a strange tongue, but we understood from their gestures that they were asking for cigarettes. A number of us immediately responded, offering them some from our packs.

When we asked who they were, one of them replied in halting English that they were Russian Cossacks. He explained that their division, which had been fighting on the western front, had been withdrawn from the lines, disarmed and placed in quarantine. They were considered unreliable, he said, because of the revolution in Russia. At the time, I was not even sure of the meaning of the word *revolution*—some kind of civil disorder I conjectured. Giving the matter no further thought, we resumed our march. It was not until I had returned from France that I began reading about the Russian Revolution. From then on, I followed its course, and despite the distorted view in the U.S. press, its significance slowly dawned on me.

Here, I felt, was a tangible accomplishment and real power. Along with other Black radicals, I was impressed—just as a later generation came to look at China, Cuba and Vietnam as models of successful struggle against tyranny, colonialism and oppression.

Thus, I was particularly attracted to the communists. True, the Party was largely white in its racial composition, with only a handful of Black members. I felt, nevertheless, that it comprised the best and most sincerely revolutionary and internationally minded elements among white radicals and therefore formed the basis for the revolutionary unity of Blacks and whites. This was so, I believed, because it was a part of a world revolutionary movement uniting Chinese, Africans and Latin Americans with Europeans and North Americans through the Third Communist International.

The Bolsheviks had destroyed the czarist rule, established the first workers' state, and breached the world system of capitalism over a territory comprising more than one-sixth of the earth's surface. Most impressive as far as Blacks were concerned was that the revolution had laid the basis for solving the national and racial questions on the basis of complete freedom for the numerous nations, colonial peoples and minorities formerly oppressed by the czarist empire. Moscow had now become the focus of the colonial revolution. In the turbulence of those days, there seemed every reason to think that the energy unleashed in Russia would carry the revolution throughout the world.

In the U.S., the deluge of lies and distortions by the media, the red baiting, the Palmer raids, had not been able to hide this monumental achievement of the Russian Bolsheviks. The uninformed Black man in the street could reason that a phenomenon that evoked such fear and hatred on the part of the white supremacist rulers "couldn't be all bad." As for me, the socialist victory confirmed my belief in the Bolshevik variety of socialism as a way out for U.S. Blacks.

I found the theory behind this achievement all there in Lenin's *State and Revolution.* He developed and applied the theories of Marx and Engels on the role of the state and the dictatorship of the proletariat. This work was the single most important book I had read in the entire three years of my political search and was decisive in leading me to the Communist Party. In this work, Lenin clarified the nature of the state and the means by which to overthrow it. His approach seemed practical and realistic; it was no longer just abstract theory.

Using *Origins of the Family* as a departure point, Lenin demystified and desanctified the myth of the state in capitalist society as an impartial monitor of human affairs. Rather, he exposed the state in capitalist society—and its apparatus of military, police, courts and prisons—as an instrument of ruling class domination, a dictatorship of the bourgeoisie.

It thus followed that the job of forcibly replacing the state power of the dominant class with that of the proletariat was the paramount and indispensable task of socialist revolution. As far as I could see, the Soviet example appeared to offer a completely clear solution to the problems facing American workers, both Black and white. I saw the elimination of racism and the achievement of complete equality for Blacks as an inevitable by-product of a socialist revolution in the United States. It was at this point that I became fully resolved to make my own personal commitment to the fight for a socialist United States.

The first part of my odyssey was over.

Chapter 4

An Organization of Revolutionaries

Otto was pleased when I first told him of my desire to join the Party in the summer of 1922. He said that he had known that I had been ready to join for some time, but he suggested that I should wait a while before joining. When I asked why, he told me about an unpleasant situation that had arisen in the Party's Southside branch.

Most of the few Black members were concentrated in this English-speaking branch, but it seemed that a number of recent Black recruits had dropped out. They resented the paternalistic attitude displayed toward them by some of the white comrades who, Otto said, treated Blacks like children and seemed to think that the whites had all the answers. It was only a temporary situation, he assured me. The matter had been taken up before the Party District Committee; if it was not resolved there, they would take it to the Central Committee.

"And if you don't get satisfaction there?" I queried.

"Well, then there's the Communist International!" he replied emphatically. "It's as much our Party as it is theirs."

I was properly impressed by his sincerity and by the idea that we could appeal our case to the "supreme court" of international communism, which included such luminaries as the great Lenin.

The Blacks who had remained in the Party had decided not to bring any new members into the branch until the matter was satisfactorily settled. I was rather surprised to hear all of this.

Clearly, membership in the Party did not automatically free whites from white supremacist ideas. Nor, for that matter, did it free Blacks from their distrust of whites. Throughout my lifetime, I found that interracial solidarity—even in the Communist Party—required a continuous ideological struggle.

Otto suggested that until the matter was cleared up I should join the African Blood Brotherhood. The ABB was a secret, all-Black, revolutionary organization to which some of the Black Party members belonged—including Otto. I later learned that the matter of white paternalism was eventually resolved to the satisfaction of the Black comrades. I don't recall the details; I think that Arne Swabeck (the district organizer) or Robert Minor from the Central Committee finally came down and lectured the branch on the evils of race prejudice and threatened disciplinary action to the point of expulsion of comrades guilty of bringing bourgeois social attitudes into the Party.

In the meantime, I took Otto's advice and joined the African Blood Brotherhood. He took me to see Edward Doty, then commander of the Brotherhood's Chicago Post. Vouched for by Otto and Doty, I was taken to a meeting of the membership committee and went through the induction ceremonies. This consisted of an African fraternization ritual requiring the mixing of blood between the applicant and one of the regular members. The organization took its name from this ritual. Doty performed the ceremony; he pricked our index fingers with a needle (I hoped it was sterilized!) and when drops of blood appeared, he rubbed them together.

Now a Blood Brother, I proceeded to take the Oath of Loyalty which contained a clause warning that divulging of any of the secrets of the organization was punishable by death. I was deeply impressed by all this; the atmosphere of great secrecy appealed to my romantic sense. There were two degrees of membership; one was automatically conferred upon joining and the second, which I took a few days later, involved the performance of some service for the organization. In my case, as I recall, it was a trivial task—the selling of a dozen or so copies of its magazine, *The Crusader.*

At the time that I joined the African Blood Brotherhood, I knew little about the organization other than the fact that it was in some way associated with the Communist Party. I do remember having read a copy or two of *The Crusader* before I joined the group.

Some of the history of the ABB I got from Otto and other post members, but most of it I found out much later when I met and worked with Cyril P. Briggs, the original founder of the group. The African Blood Brotherhood was founded in New York City in 1919 by a group of Black radicals under the leadership of Briggs. A West Indian (as were most of the founders), he was a former editor of the *Amsterdam News*, a Black New York newspaper. He quit in disagreement over policy with the owner, who attempted to censor his anti-war editorials. Briggs's own magazine. *The Crusader,* was established in 1919. The Brotherhood was organized around the magazine with Briggs as its executive head presiding over a supreme council.

The group was originally conceived as the African Blood Brotherhood "for African liberation and redemption" and was later broadened to "for immediate protection and ultimate liberation of Negroes everywhere." As it was a secret organization, it never sought broad membership. National headquarters were in New York. Its size never exceeded 3,000. But its influence was many times greater than this; the *Crusader* at one time claimed a circulation of 33,000.[1] There was also *The Crusader* News Service which was distributed to two hundred Black newspapers.

Briggs, his associates—Richard B. Moore, Grace Campbell and others—and *The Crusader* were among the vanguard forces for the New Negro movement, an ideological current which reflected the new mood of militancy and social awareness of young Blacks of the post-war period. In New York, the New Negro movement also included the radical magazine, *The Messenger,* edited by Chandler Owen and A. Philip Randolph, and *The Emancipator*, edited by W.A. Domingo. Many of the groups were members of the Socialist Party or close to it politically. They espoused "economic radicalism," an over-simplified interpretation of Marxism which, nevertheless, enabled them to see the economic and social roots of racial subjugation. Historically, theirs was the first serious attempt by Blacks to adopt the Marxist world view and the theory of class struggle to the problems of Black Americans.

Within this broad grouping, however, there were differences which emerged later. Briggs was definitely a revolutionary nationalist; that is, he saw the solution of the "race problem" in the establishment of independent Black nation-states in Africa, the Caribbean and the United States. In America, he felt this could be achieved only through revolutionizing the whole country. This meant he saw revolutionary white workers as allies. These were elements of a program which he perceived as an alternative to Garvey's plan of mass exodus.

A self-governing Black state on U.S. soil was a novel idea for which Briggs sent up trial balloons in the form of editorials in the *Amsterdam News* in 1917, of which he was then editor. Shortly after the entrance of the United States into World War I, he wrote an editorial entitled "Security of Life for Poles and Serbs—Why Not for Colored Americans?"[2]

Briggs, however, had no definite idea for the location of the future "colored autonomous state," suggesting at various times Washington, Oregon, Idaho, California or Nevada. Later, after President Wilson had put forth his fourteen points in January 1918, Briggs equated the plight of Blacks in the United States to nations occupied by Germany and demanded:

> With what moral authority or justice can President Wilson demand that eight million Belgians be freed when for his entire first term and to the present moment of his second term he has not lifted a finger for justice and liberty for over TEN MILLION colored people, a nation within a nation, a nationality oppressed and jim-crowed, yet worthy as any other people of a square deal or failing that, a separate political existence ?[3]

He continued this theme in *The Crusader.* One year after the founding of the Brotherhood, Briggs shifted from the idea of a Black state on U.S. soil to the advocacy of a Black state in Africa, South America or the Caribbean, where those Blacks who wanted to could migrate. In this, he was undoubtedly on the defensive, giving ground to the overwhelming Garvey deluge then sweeping the national Black community. In 1921, Briggs was to link the struggle for equal rights of U.S. Blacks with the establishment of a Black state in Africa and elsewhere:

> Just as the Negro in the United States can never hope to win equal rights with his white neighbors until Africa is liberated and a strong Negro state (or states) erected on that continent, so, too, we can never liberate Africa unless, and until, the American Section of the Negro Race is made strong enough to play the part for a free Africa that the Irish in America now play for a free Ireland.[4]

The Brotherhood rejected Garvey's racial separatism. They knew that Blacks needed allies and tied the struggle for equal rights to that of the progressive section of white labor. In the 1918-1919 elections, the Brotherhood supported the Socialist Party candidates. *The Crusader* and the ABB were ardent supporters of the Russian Revolution; they saw it as an opportunity for Blacks to identify with a powerful international revolutionary movement.[5] It enabled them to overcome the isolation inherent in their position as a minority people in the midst of a powerful and hostile white oppressor nation. Thus, *The Crusader* called for an alliance with the Bolsheviks against race prejudice. In 1921, the magazine made its clearest formulation, linking the struggles of Blacks and other oppressed nations with socialism:

> The surest and quickest way, then, in our opinion, to achieve the salvation of the Negro is to combine the two most likely and feasible propositions, viz.: salvation for all Negroes through the establishment of a strong, stable, independent Negro State (along the lines of our own race genius) in Africa and elsewhere: and salvation for all Negroes (as well as other oppressed people) through the establishment of a Universal Socialist Co-operative commonwealth.[6]

The split in the world socialist movement as a result of the First World War led to the formation of the Third (Communist) International in 1919. This split was reflected in the New Negro movement as well. Randolph and Owens, the whole *Messenger* crowd, remained with the social democrats of the Second International who were in opposition to the Bolshevik revolution. Members of *The Crusader* group—Briggs, Moore and others—

gravitated toward the Third International and eventually joined its American affiliate, the Communist Party. They were followed in the next year or two by Otto Hall, Lovett Fort-Whiteman and others.

The decline of the African Blood Brotherhood in the early twenties and its eventual demise coincided with the growing participation of its leadership in the activities of the Communist Party. By 1923-24, the Brotherhood had ceased to exist as an autonomous, organized expression of the national revolutionary trend. Its leading members became communists or close sympathizers and its posts served as one of the Party's recruiting grounds for Blacks.

I first met Briggs upon my return from Russia in 1930. We were to strike up a lasting friendship—one that went beyond the comradeship of the Party and which extended over more than three decades, until his death in 1967. Throughout those years, we were associated on numerous projects and found ourselves on the same side of many political issues.

When I first met Briggs, he conformed to the impression that I had been given of him: a tall, impressive-looking man—so light in complexion that he was often mistaken for white. He had a large head and bushy black eyebrows. He was a man possessed of great physical and moral courage, which I was to observe on many occasions. Briggs also had a fiery temper, which was usually controlled in the case of comrades or friends.

He had one outstanding physical defect—he was a heavy stutterer. He stuttered so much that it often took him several seconds to get out the first word of a sentence. When he took the floor at meetings we would all listen attentively; no one would interrupt him because we knew he always had something important and pertinent to say. While he spoke we would cast our eyes down and look away from him to avoid making him feel self-conscious, though he never seemed to be.

We noticed that he stuttered less when he was angry. One such occasion was when Garvey rejected Briggs's offer of cooperation. The wily Garvey saw through the maneuver for what it was—an attempt by Briggs to gain a position from which he could better attack him. Garvey lashed out at Briggs, calling him a "white man trying to pass himself off as a Negro."

Friends told me that this attack sent Briggs into such a rage that he mounted a soapbox at Harlem's 135th Street and Lenox Avenue and assailed Garvey for two hours without a stutter, branding him a charlatan and a fraud. Not content with this verbal lashing of his enemy, Briggs hauled Garvey into court on the charge of defamation of character. He won the case, forcing Garvey to make a public apology and pay a fine of one dollar.

Briggs's real forte, however, was as a keen polemicist, a veritable master of invective. His speech handicap was a pity, because aside from the stutter he had all the qualities of a good orator. Closely associated with Briggs was Richard B. Moore, a fine orator who did much public speaking for the ABB.

What were the reasons for the decline of the ABB and its eventual absorption by the Communist Party? Why did Briggs fail to develop the program for Black self-determination in the USA? In the fifties, I had a series of talks with Briggs and asked his opinion on these questions.

His overall appraisal of the role of the Brotherhood was that it was a forerunner of the contemporary national revolutionary trend and a very positive thing. "Of course, we didn't stop Garvey," he said, but "we were beginning to develop a revolutionary alternative. We did put a crimp in his sails," Briggs added.

For a while, the ABB had been a rallying center for left opposition to Garvey. Its membership included class-conscious Black workers and revolutionary intellectuals and drew membership from both disillusioned Garveyites and radicals who never took to Garvey's program in the first place. The main reason for de-emphasizing the idea of Black nationhood in the United States, Briggs stated, was the unfavorable relationship of forces then existing.

Garvey, with his Back to Africa program, had preempted the leadership of the mass movement and corralled most of the militants. His hold over the masses was strengthened by the anti-Black violence of the Red Summer of 1919. This gave further credence to Garvey's contention that the U.S. was a white man's country where Blacks could never achieve equality. Indeed, for these masses, his program for a Black state in Africa to which American Blacks could migrate seemed far less utopian than the idea of a Black state on U.S. soil.

As for the South, Briggs did not feel that such a region of entrenched racism could be projected realistically as a territorial focus of a Black nationalist state. It would not have been so accepted by the masses who were in flight from the area. For himself, he reasoned, the very idea of self-determination in the United States presupposed the support of white revolutionaries. That meant a revolutionary crisis in the country as a whole, and in that day no such prospect was in sight. In fact, white revolutionary forces were then small and weak, the target of the vicious anti-red drives of the government and employers.

In other words, he felt that Black self-determination in the United States was an idea whose time had not yet come. The communists didn't have all the answers, and neither did we, Briggs indicated. Whites, as well as a number of Black radicals, undoubtedly underestimated the national element; socialism alone was seen as the solution. Briggs was impressed, however, by the sincerity and revolutionary ardor of the communists and by the fact that they were a detachment of Lenin's Third Communist International. He felt that the future of the revolution in the United States and of Black liberation lay in multinational communist leadership.

Though the ABB ceased to exist as an organized, independent expression of the national revolutionary current, the tendency itself remained, awaiting the further maturing of its main driving force, the Black proletariat. By the end of the decade, the national revolutionary sentiment was to find expression in the program of the Communist Party.

By the time I joined the Brotherhood's Chicago post in the summer of 1922, *The Crusader* had dropped much of its original national revolutionary orientation. Although I was then unaware of it, Briggs and the supreme council were presiding over the absorption of the organization into the Communist Party.

In Chicago, the decline of the organization was slower than elsewhere. Perhaps this was because it had a strong base among Black building-tradesmen, plumbers, electricians and bricklayers. Edward Doty, a plumber by trade, was simultaneously the ABB post commander and a leader and founder of the American Consolidated Trades Council (ACTC). The council was a federation of independent Black unions and groups in the building trades industry who had formed their own unions for the double purpose of protecting Black workers on the job and counteracting the discriminatory policies of the white AFL craft unions dominant in the field.

Doty, a tall, muscular man, was born in Mobile, Alabama, and had come north in 1912 at the age of seventeen. According to him, most of the Black steamfitters and plumbers had learned their trades in the stockyards during the industrial boom and labor shortage that accompanied World War I. Some, however, had gotten their training at Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. Active in the Brotherhood along with Doty were such outstanding leaders of the Black workers' struggle as Herman Dorsey (an electrician) and Alexander Dunlap (a plumber).

Besides the tradesmen, other members of the ABB post included a number of older radicals such as Alonzo Isabel, Norval Allen, Gordon Owens, H.V. Phillips, Otto Hall and several others. Together with Doty, they made up the communist core of the Brotherhood.

My experiences in the ABB marked my first association with Black communists. I had met some of them before, at forums and lectures; I had heard Owens speak at the Bugs Club and Dill Pickle forums, but I had never worked together with any of them before.[7] They were mostly workers from the stockyards and other industries. One or two, like myself, were from the service trades. Like Otto, several of them had previously been in the Garvey movement. There was no doubt that they represented a politically advanced section of the Black working class. They were the types who today would be called "political activists," the people who kept abreast of the issues in the Southside community and participated in local struggles.

I was interested to learn their backgrounds and how they had come to the revolutionary movement. I found that some of them had been among Chicago's first Marxist-oriented Black radicals and had been associated with the Free Thought Society. This society was formed immediately after the war and held regular forums. I believe its leader and founder was a young man named Tibbs. He was one of the earliest of Chicago's Black radicals. A victim of police harassment and persecution, Tibbs was arrested during the Palmer raids in 1919 and spent several years in jail on a fake charge of stealing automobile tires. This continual persecution reduced his political effectiveness, which was as the authorities intended.

Members of the Free Thought Society Forum, I learned, had cooperated with the New Negro group of economic radicals centered around the radical weekly, *The Whip*, edited by Joseph Bibb, A.C. MacNeal (who later became secretary of the Chicago NAACP), and William C. Linton. The members of this group, unlike their New York counterparts, were not avowed socialists. They were, nevertheless, influenced by socialist ideas and regarded the "race problem" as basically economic.

In 1920, members of the Free Thought Society took an active part in the campaign of the Independent Non-Partisan League, sponsored by *The Whip* and its editors. This coalition ran a full slate of candidates in the Republican primary of that year, in which they challenged the old guard Republicans of the second ward Republican organization as well as the so-called New People's Movement of Oscar DePriest.[8]

The election platform called for abolition of all discrimination, for public ownership of utilities, civil service reform, women's suffrage, children's welfare service and "organization of labor into one union." While they were not successful in turning back the Republican old guard, the campaign resulted in appreciable gains for some of the league's candidates.

At that time, the main efforts of the ABB were directed at mobilizing community support for the Black ACTC tradesmen. While retaining a secret character, its members participated as individuals in campaigns on local issues. They collaborated with the Trade Union Education League (TUEL) of which Doty was a member, in its drive to organize the stockyards. The TUEL supported the demands of the ACTC. At that time, it was led by William Z. Foster and Jack Johnstone. Later to become the Trade Union Unity League, it was a gathering of the revolutionary and progressive forces within trade unions to fight against the reactionary labor bureaucracy and their collaborationist policies and Jim Crowism.

Other members of the Brotherhood participated in the campaign against high rents that was waged in the Southside community. This was a fight in which a white Party member, Bob Minor, and his wife, Lydia Gibson, played leading roles.

I found my experience in the Brotherhood both stimulating and rewarding. In addition to learning a lot from the communists with whom I was associated, it was here I forged my first active association with Black industrial workers. I found them literate, articulate and class conscious, a proud and defiant group which had been radicalized by the struggles against discriminatory practices of the unions and employers. They understood the meaning of solidarity and the need for militant organization to obtain their objectives. In this, they were quite different from the people with whom I had been associated at the post office, as well as writers whom I so commonly found to be stamped with a hustler mentality. Doty and his followers in the Trades Council were pioneers in the struggle for the rights of Black workers, a struggle which has continued over half a century and remains unfinished to this day.

The older tradesmen finally fought their way into the unions, the electricians in 1938 and the plumbers in 1947. In the early fifties, Doty became the first Black officer in the plumbers' union. But these gains were only token! The bars are still up against Blacks and other minority workers seeking jobs in the ninety billion dollar-a-year industry.

THE YOUNG COMMUNIST LEAGUE

My sojourn in the African Blood Brotherhood was brief—

about six months. I felt the need to move on. My original goal was the Communist Party. While I was in the ABB, the problem of white chauvinism in the Southside branch had been cleared up. Joining the Party was no longer a problem, after all, the Brotherhood had been but a stopover.

I was about to apply for admission when H.V. Phillips asked me to join the Young Workers (Communist) League, the youth division of the Communist Party. Phillips, I learned, was a member of the district and national committees of the League. When I told him I was just about to join the Party, he said: "That's all right, but you're a young fellow and should be among the youth. Besides, more of us Blacks are needed in the League."

I thought the matter over. "Why not? It's all the same, they're all communists."

The next day Phillips took me to meet John Harvey, a white youth who was district organizer of the League. Harvey told me that I had been highly recommended to them by Phillips and others. He expressed delight at my decision to join and said that it fit right in with their plans since they were anxious to move forward with work among Black youth, but were handicapped by the fact that they had only a few Black members.

I expressed doubt that I could be considered a youth at the age of twenty-five.

They replied that there were a number of members my age and older in the organization. All that was needed, they assured me, was for one to have the "youth angle."

"What is that?" I asked.

"Oh, that simply means the ability to understand youth and their problems and to be able to communicate with them."

I was not sure I had all of these qualities, but the proposition appealed to me. So I joined the YCL in the winter of 1923. The League at that time was a close-knit fraternity of idealistic and dedicated young people determined to build a new world for future generations. When we sang the Youth International at meetings, we actually felt ourselves to be, as the song proclaimed, "the youthful guardsmen of the proletariat."

The organization was small, with only several hundred members. As I recall, Phillips and myself were the only Blacks. I was still working on the Santa Fe and on layovers I spent most of the time getting acquainted with my new comrades, attending classes, meetings and social gatherings. I was impressed by what seemed to me to be a high level of political development and by their use of Marxist terminology. It made me keenly aware of my own sketchy knowledge of Marxism and the revolutionary movement and spurred me to close the gap. A partial explanation for their political sophistication, I felt, was the fact that a large number of them, perhaps a majority, were "red diaper" babies—their parents being old revolutionaries, either members of the Party or its supporters. On the whole, they were a spirited, intelligent group, and as far as I could discern exhibited not a trace of race prejudice. Many went on to become leaders of the Party.

There was our district organizer, John Harvey, a lanky youth and one of the few WASPs; Max Shachtman, a brilliant young orator and editor of the League's theoretical organ, the *Young Worker,* who was later to become first a Trotskyist and then a rabid, professional anti-communist. There was Valeria Meltz, an able young leader, and her brother; their ethnic background was Russian-American, as was that of Jim Sklar (Keller). His brothers Gus and Boris were old stalwarts in the Russian Federation and were well known. There was also Nat Kaplan (Ganley) and Gil Green. Gil was about sixteen at the time; we used to call him "the kid." He went on to become national chairman of the YCL and later a national leader in the Party. I met a number of the League's national leaders: Johnny Williamson, a Scottish-American and national secretary, Herbert Zam, Sam Darcy, Marty Abern, Phil Herbert and others, many of whom were to become national leaders of the Party.

There was no scarcity of places for meetings or for social affairs. We were on friendly terms with Jane Addams and her people at Hull House, where we sometimes met. Other times we used the halls of various language groups. We participated in and supported the activities of the Anti-Imperialist League, headed by Manny Gomez, the Party's Latin American specialist. The main campaign at the time was against the invasion of Nicaragua by the U.S.

Marines.

I was particularly impressed by Bob Mazut, a young Russian representative of the Young Communist International (YCI) to the League. A small, dark-complected and soft-spoken young man, Mazut hailed from Soviet Georgia. His mild manner belied his impressive background. Only twenty-five when I met him, he had fought in the Revolution and Civil War, first as a Red Partisan and then in the Red Army, in which he advanced to the rank of colonel. He spoke what we called "political English," and we were always amused by some of his expressions. For example, I remember how we used to kid Mazut about his being sweet on a certain girl comrade. "She likes you very much," someone would say, "but she's a little overawed by you."

He replied very seriously, "How can I liquidate her suspicions of me?"

He took particular interest in me. I believe Phillips and I were the first Blacks he had ever really known and for us he was the first real Soviet communist we had met. I asked questions about Russia and told him I wanted to go there and see it for myself. "You undoubtedly will," he said in a matter-of-fact tone, as if the matter were settled.

On one occasion he told me of a discussion he had had on the eve of his departure from Russia. Zinoviev, then president of the Communist International, had asked him to look closely into the Afro-American question in the United States, and to see if he could find any confirmation for his belief and that of other Russian leaders that the right of self-determination was the appropriate slogan for Black rebellion. Zinoviev added that he had long believed that the question would become the "Achilles heel of American imperialism." I told Mazut that I liked the part about the "Achilles heel," but I didn't feel that the slogan of self-determination was applicable for U.S. Blacks. It was my understanding that the principle had to do with nations, and Blacks were not a national but a racial minority. To me, it smacked of Garvey's separatism.

Mazut nevertheless raised the question of self-determination for discussion in a meeting of the Chicago District Committee of the

YCL. Desirous of getting the committee's reaction to the question, he was literally shouted down by the white comrades. "Blacks are Americans," they said. "They want equality, not separation." Phillips and I, the only Black members of the committee, were non-committal. And that was the end of that. They did not pursue the matter further.

In order to move forward in work with Black youth, we struck upon the idea of organizing an interracial youth forum on the Southside. The organizing committee consisted of Chi (Dum Ping), a Chinese student at the University of Chicago; a young woman official of the colored YMCA; Phillips, a white League member; and myself. During this period, I was still working on the Santa Fe, but on my layovers I devoted all my time to the forum. We had rented a small hall, decorated it and got out our publicity—leaflets, posters and an ad in the *Chicago Defender*. Our first speaker was to be John Harden, a Black radical orator. It was our first effort at mass work among young Blacks and with our youthful enthusiasm, we were certain of success. But the venture proved to be abortive.

I can still remember our shock when we came to our meeting place to find it wrecked. Furniture was smashed, posters ripped from the walls. There was no doubt in our minds that this was the work of the police who had unleashed their stool pigeons against us. Some of our non-communist friends dropped out, and the project collapsed. The idea of a forum was abandoned—temporarily, we hoped. A less ambitious plan was then agreed to.

If we could enlarge our cadres by a few more Blacks, we thought, we would have a better base from which to approach mass work. It was therefore suggested that Phillips and I approach some of our acquaintances and try to recruit them directly into the League. I eliminated my waiter friends, all of whom were too old, and approached one of my former colleagues, a postal worker, who had been in our study circle and whom I considered a likely prospect. I remember that he sat very quietly while I delivered a long lecture on the League's program and activities and the need to get support among Black youth.

Finally interrupting me, he blurted out, "I'm sorry, Hall, but I find being Black trouble enough, but to be Black and red at the same time, well that's just double trouble, and when you mix in the whites, why that's triple trouble."

At first I was rather shocked by his off-hand rebuff, considering it to be an expression of cynical opportunism. I felt that he had backslid, even from his position at the post office, but he continued in a more serious tone. Apparently he felt a deep distrust for whites and their motives. He regarded the YCL as just another organization of white "do-gooders" and saw me as their captive Negro. When I interrupted to say something about socialism, he cut me short. He said that he too was for socialism as a final solution, but that was a long way off and he would not put it beyond the whites in the United States to distort socialism in a manner in which they could remain top dogs. In any case, he believed Blacks would have to be on guard. In the meantime, he believed Blacks should retain their own organizations under their own leadership. Alliances, yes—but we ourselves must decide the terms and conditions, he said.

Our exchange had gotten off on the wrong foot. I was deeply chagrined by his charge that I was a captive of the whites and that the League was a white organization. For me, that meant that he felt that I was a "white folks' nigger." As I recall, I retorted by calling him a Black racialist who saw everything in terms of Black and white.

"Why not?" he replied. "Being a Negro, how else should I see things?"

After this flare-up, our tempers cooled off and we continued our discussion in calmer tones. But I was definitely on the defensive, trying to explain why I was in the League and that it was not an organization of white "do-gooders" as he had charged. It was a revolutionary, interracial vanguard organization, I asserted. Sure, we only had a few Blacks now, but our numbers would grow, I argued.

He was still skeptical and repeated that he was for socialism, but a special road toward this goal he felt was necessary for Black Americans, under their own leadership and organization.

"Do you mean a Black party?" I queried.

"Why not?" he rejoined. "It might be necessary as a safeguard for our interests."

I had no answers to his position. There was a logic to it which I hadn't thought about.

We finally parted on friendly terms, promising to keep in touch. I left, realizing that I'd come out the worst in our exchange. I felt that I had failed in my first effort to recruit a good Black man to the League and that we still had some study to do with regards to Black nationalism.

My friend had been, as I recalled, a bitter critic of Garvey, and I therefore assumed that he was hostile to Black nationalism. But now it seemed that he expressed some of Garvey's racial separatism. Thinking the matter over, I finally came to the conclusion that the main reason for my inability to counter his arguments was that I sensed that they contained a good measure of truth. What was most disturbing was the sense that his position was less isolated from the masses of Blacks than was my own.

Up to that point, I had failed to understand the contradictory nature of Black nationalism. I had rejected it totally as a reactionary bourgeois philosophy which, in the conditions of the U.S., had found its logical expression in Garvey's Back to Africa program. It was therefore a diversion from the struggle for economic, social and political equality—the true goal of Blacks in the United States. The fight for equality, I felt, was revolutionary in that it was unattainable within the framework of U.S. capitalist society. Nationalism, moreover, was divisive and played into the hands of the reactionary racists. This, of course, did not exclude the acceptance of some of its features, such as race pride and self-reliance, which were not inconsistent with, but an essential element in, the fight for equality.

While rejecting nationalism, I also rejected the bourgeois-assimilationist position of the NAACP and its associates, and their blind acceptance of white middle class values and culture. What confused me were attempts to amalgamate what I felt were two mutually contradictory elements—socialism and the class struggle on the one hand, and nationalism on the other. Or was the contradiction more apparent than real, I wondered. My friend's nationalism did not go to the point of advocacy of a separate Black nation. He demanded only autonomy in leadership and organization of the Black freedom movement. Was this inconsistent with the concept of equality and class unity? Had not Blacks the right to formulate their conditions for unity? For me, this was the first time I had encountered these questions.

I attempted to reflect on my short experience in the YCL. Was there not a basis for Black distrust of even white revolutionaries? The situation in the League was not as idyllic as I had first thought. There was a certain underestimation of the importance of the Black struggle against discrimination and for equal rights among both the youth and the adults of the communist movement. Behind that, I sensed there was a feeling that the Black struggle was not itself really revolutionary, but was sort of a drag on the "pure" class struggle.

This was no doubt a legacy of the old Socialist Party. Even such a revolutionary as Debs had said: "We have nothing special to offer the Negro, and we cannot make separate appeals to all the races. The Socialist Party is the party of the working-class, regardless of color."[9] And regarding the Afro-American question: "Social equality, forsooth ... is pure fraud and serves to mask the real issue, which is not *social equality, but economic freedom.*"[10] "The Socialist platform has not a word in reference to 'social equality.' "[11] Evidently, there were a number of theoretical matters still to be cleared up on the question of the struggle for Black equality and freedom.

I joined the Party itself in the spring of 1925, recruited by Robert Minor, with the consent of the League. I had quit the Santa Fe the summer before, and, totally committed to the communist cause, I then decided to devote more time to the work and to eventually becoming a professional revolutionary. I took extra jobs on weekends and worked banquets and an occasional extra trip on the road. I was living at home with my Mother, Father and sister, who had an infant child, David. All were employed, with my Mother accepting occasional catering jobs.

Minor, whom I had known for some time, was a reconstructed white Southerner from Texas, a direct descendant of Sam

Houston (first Governor of the Lone Star State). He was a former anarchist and one of the great political cartoonists of his day. His powerful cartoons were carried in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch,* and later on in the old *Masses* (a cultural magazine of the left) and in the *Daily Worker.* Among his many talents, he was a journalist of no small ability. Having travelled widely in Europe as a news correspondent during the First World War, Minor had visited Russia during the revolutionary period and had met and spoken with Lenin.

With these impressive credentials, he was now a member of the Party's Central Committee and responsible for its Negro work. This was understood as an interim assignment, eventually to be taken over by a Black comrade as soon as one could be developed to fill the position. The person then being groomed for the job was Lovett Fort-Whiteman, who was then in Russia taking a crash course in communist leadership. He had been an associate of Briggs on *The Crusader* and also worked with Randolph and Owens on *The Messenger.* Later, as I recall, his selection was the cause for some disgruntlement among the Black comrades.

Why was Fort-Whiteman chosen in preference to such well-known and capable Blacks as Richard B. Moore, Otto Huiswood or Cyril P. Briggs, all of whom had revolutionary records superior to Fort-Whiteman's? At that time, there were no Blacks on the Central Committee, and even when Fort-Whiteman returned from Russia in 1925 to take charge of Afro-American work, Minor remained responsible to the Central Committee. While not as flamboyant as Fort-Whiteman, these Black leaders had records comparable to, or better than, those of many whites on the Central Committee.

Be that as it may, of all the white comrades, Minor was best fitted for the assignment because of his wide knowledge of and close interest in the question. His intense hatred of his Southern racist background came through in some of the most powerful cartoons of the day. He had wide acquaintances among Black middle class intellectuals. Bob and his wife Lydia had turned their Southside apartment into a virtual salon where Black and white friends would gather to discuss the issues of the day. There I met various Black notables, including Dean Pickens, national field secretary of the NAACP, and Abraham Harris, then secretary of the Minneapolis Urban League. Harris would later become Chairman of the Economics Department of Howard University, and then a full professor of the same subject at the University of Chicago.

THE FOURTH CONVENTION OF THE CPUSA

It was the period immediately before the Fourth National Convention of the Communist Party. The factional fight was at its height, with the Party split between two warring camps: the Ruthenberg-Pepper group vs. the Foster-Bittelman group. The atmosphere was rife with charges and counter-charges of "right opportunism" and "left sectarianism." This factionalism had spilled over into the League, which reflected the alignments then current within the Party.

I had stood aloof from these factions, as I did not clearly understand the issues. The question of Blacks did not seem to be directly involved. I assumed it was a clash mainly between personalities and narrow group interests, and did not reflect political principles. Each side accused the other of responsibility for the "Farmer-Labor fiasco" which left the Party isolated in its first major attempt to form a united front.[12] I could see no differences among the factions on the question of bolshevization of the Party.

The Comintern had recently called upon the Party to bolshevize its ranks. Among other things, this called for the reorganization of the Party on the basis of shop and street units, and the elimination of the foreign language clubs as federated organizations within the Party. These clubs remained close to the Party, however, and followed its leadership.

I was inclined to favor the Ruthenberg-Pepper group because most of the Party's Black members—Doty, Elizabeth Griffin, Alonzo Isabel, Otto and my sister Eppa—were in that group. This, I suspected, was partly due to the influence of Bob Minor and

Lydia Gibson—their work on the Southside in the tenants' struggle of 1924, their support of Doty's Consolidated Trades Council, and their consistent advocacy in the Party of the importance of work among Blacks. (Most of this occurred after I had left the ABB and joined the YCL.)

Upon joining the Party, I immediately became part of the Ruthenberg group. Under Minor's tutelage, I was to undergo intensive indoctrination. According to the Ruthenberg faction, Foster, Bittelman, Jack Johnstone and their allies (Cannon, Dunne and Shachtman) were opportunist, narrow-minded trade unionists lacking in Marxist theory and hence in the ability to lead a Marxist party. They said that Foster's group, which possessed a majority of the delegates, was out to steamroll the convention and toss Ruthenberg, Pepper and Lovestone out of the leadership.

For most of us, the clincher was that the Foster group lacked the confidence of the Communist International. This latter charge, it seemed to me, was confirmed by the decisions of the Fourth Party Convention the following summer. I was a delegate to this convention from the YCL. I was to witness the intervention of the CI in the person of its on-the-spot representative, Comrade Green (Gusev), an old Bolshevik friend and co-worker of Lenin and Stalin. For obvious security reasons, only the leaders of both factions had direct contact with him. His job was to suppress factionalism and to unite the Party on the basis of the Comintern line. I must say that he tackled this task with an expertise that was remarkable to behold.

First, he set up what was called a Parity Committee, composed of an equal number of top leaders of both factions, with himself as a neutral chairman. Since the two factions were evenly represented on the committee, his was the deciding vote. I remember that there was widespread speculation among the delegates as to which faction he would support. We didn't have long to wait.

The convention had been in session about a week. The atmosphere was charged, passions inflamed, a split seemed imminent. Indeed, our caucus leaders had difficulty in preventing a walkout by some of the more hot-headed members. A message finally arrived in the form of a cable from the CI (which undoubtedly was sent at Gusev's urging). The cable was presented to the Parity Committee by Gusev. It demanded that "under no circumstances" should the Foster majority "be allowed to suppress the Ruthenberg group...because," it went on to say, "the Ruthenberg group is more loyal to the decisions of the Communist International and stands closer to its views. It has the majority or strong minority in most districts and the Foster group uses excessively mechanical and ultra-factional methods." It further demanded that the Ruthenberg group "get not less than forty percent of the Central Executive Committee" and insisted as "an ultimatum" to the majority "that Ruthenberg retains post of Secretary...categorically insist upon Lovestone's Central Executive Committee membership...demand retention by Ruthenberg group of co-editorship on central organ."[13]

The results were greeted with great jubilation by our group. Foster refused to accept the majority of the incoming Central Committee under these circumstances (in which his loyalty was questioned) and ceded leadership to the Ruthenberg group. The result was that the Ruthenberg-Pepper group retained key positions on the new Central Committee—Ruthenberg as general secretary, Lovestone as organizational secretary, Bedacht as agitprop head.

Despite factionalism, the convention marked a step forward in the work among Blacks. Although its decisions threw no new light on the question, the platform adopted did contain the most elaborate statement the Party had thus far made.

It subscribed to full equality in the relationship between Black and white workers. It advocated the right to vote, abolition of Jim Crowism in law and custom, including segregation and intermarriage laws. The main thrust of the program, however, was directed towards building Black and white labor unity on the job and in the union. Toward this end the platform asserted that:

> Our Party must work among the unorganized Negro workers destroying whatever prejudice may exist against trade unions, which has been cultivated by white capitalists...(and) the Negro petty-bourgeoisie... Our Party must make itself the foremost spokesman for the real abolition of all discrimina-

> tion of the as yet largely unorganized Negro workers in the same union with the white workers on the same basis of equality of membership, equality of right to employment in all branches of work and equality of pay.[14]

The Party called for the inclusion of Black workers in the existing unions. It came out against racial separatism and dual unionism, but it declared its intention to organize Blacks into separate unions wherever they were barred from existing organizations and to use the separation as a battering ram against Black exclusion. Emphasizing the relationship between these partial demands and ultimate goals, the platform declared that the accomplishment of the above aims was not an end in itself and that on the contrary, it was the struggle for their accomplishment that was even more important:

> In the course of the struggle with such demands we will demonstrate...that these aspirations can be realized only as a result of the successful class struggle against capitalism and with the establishment of the rule of the working class in the Soviet form.[15]

It must be remembered that by this time the attempts to infiltrate the Garvey movement had proven unsuccessful and that the African Blood Brotherhood, the sole revolutionary Black organization in the field, had been dissolved. To meet the need for an organizational vehicle to put our program into effect, the Party and the Trade Union Educational League sponsored the American Negro Labor Congress (ANLC). [16]

In the meantime, Lovett Fort-Whiteman, our man in Moscow, returned to head up the Negro work and to prepare the launching of the ANLC. H.V. Phillips, Edwards, Doty and I were assigned to the organizing committee for the congress, drafting and circulating the call, and approaching organizations for delegates. As I remember, most of the Blacks in the Party were assigned to work on the congress. Otto was not involved in these activities, as immediately after the Fourth Party Convention, he had left for Moscow with the first batch of Black students.

Fort-Whiteman was truly a fantastic figure. A brown-skinned man of medium height, Fort-Whiteman's high cheekbones gave him somewhat of an Oriental look. He had affected a Russian style of dress, sporting a *robochka* (a man's long belted shirt) which came almost to his knees, ornamental belt, high boots and a fur hat. Here was a veritable Black Cossack who could be seen sauntering along the streets of Southside Chicago. Fort-Whiteman was a graduate of Tuskegee and, as I understood, had had some training as an actor. He had been a drama critic for *The Messenger* and for *The Crusader.* There was no doubt that he was a showman; he always seemed to be acting out a part he had chosen for himself.

Upon his return from the Soviet Union, he held a number of press conferences in which he delineated plans for the American Negro Labor Congress, and as a Black communist fresh from Russia, he made good news copy.

Fort-Whiteman had taken responsibility for lining up entertainment for the opening night of the congress. Characteristically, with his Russian affectations, he arranged for a program of Russian ballet and theater. The rest of us didn't question what he was doing, and the incongruity of the program didn't occur to us until the opening night.

The meeting took place in a hall on Indiana Avenue near Thirty-first Street, in the midst of the Black ghetto. When I arrived it was packed—perhaps 500 people or so. Inside, I was suddenly attracted by a commotion at the door. As a member of the steering committee, I walked over to see what was the matter. Something was amiss with the "Russian ballet" which was about to enter the hall. A young blonde woman in the "ballet" had been shocked by the complexion of most of the audience, which she had apparently expected to be of another hue. Loudly, in a broad Texas accent, she exclaimed, "Ah'm not goin' ta dance for these niggahs!"

Somebody shouted, "Throw the cracker bitches out!" and the "Russian" dance group hurriedly left the hall.

The Russian actors remained to perform a one-act Pushkin play. They, at least, were genuine Russians from the Russian Federation. But alas, it was in Russian. Of itself, the play was undoubtedly interesting, but its relevance to a Black workers' congress was, to say the least, unclear. Although Pushkin was a

Black man, he wrote as a Russian, and the characters portrayed were Russian. More significant, however, and perhaps an indication of our sectarian approach, was the fact that no Black artist appeared on the program.

Fort-Whiteman made the keynote speech outlining the purposes and tasks of the congress. He was a passable orator and received a good response. Otto Huiswood, an associate of Briggs and one of the first Blacks to join the Party, also spoke. Richard B. Moore brought the house down with an impassioned speech which reached its peroration in Claude McKay's poem, "If We Must Die." I was spellbound by Moore; I had never heard such oratory.

That night, Phillips and I left the hall in high spirits. In fact, I was literally walking on air. At last, I felt, we were about to get somewhere in our work among Blacks. Phillips, a bit more sober than I, remarked, "Let's wait and see the report of the credentials committee."

His caution was justified, for the big letdown came the following morning. The first working session of the congress convened with about forty Black and white delegates, mainly communists and close sympathizers. The crowd of 500 at the opening night rally had been mainly community people. I think it was Phillips who remarked that there was hardly a face in the working session that he didn't recognize; most participants, sadly, were from the Chicago area.

The organizing committee had prepared draft resolutions for the congress to consider. As we had anticipated a much larger turnout, we had made plans for a credentials committee, resolutions committee, etc. But in light of the small attendance, these resolutions and preparations took on an Alice-in-Wonderland quality. For example, according to the constitution, the group's purpose was to "unify the efforts...of all organizations of Negro workers and farmers as well as organizations composed of both Negro and white workers and farmers."[17]

Despite our efforts and work, the ANLC never got off the ground. Few local units were formed, resolutions and plans were never carried into action. Only its official paper, the *Negro*

Champion, subsidized by the Party, continued for several years.

Among the post-mortems undertaken on the organization was the one made by James Ford in his book, *The Negro and the Democratic Front.* He commented that "for the period of its existence, it (the ANLC) was almost completely isolated from the basic masses of the Negro people."[18] Disappointment and disillusionment followed and personal differences surfaced among our group. The fact was that the congress had failed, and with it, the first efforts to build a left-led united front among Blacks.

There was a natural tendency to find scapegoats for the failure. Moore and Huiswood, the able delegates from New York, seemed to have come to Chicago with a chip on their shoulders. They made no attempt to hide their contempt for Fort-Whiteman, whom they had known in New York. They openly alluded to him as "Minor's man Friday." At the time, I was a bit shocked at what I felt was an attempt to malign these comrades. This was especially true of Bob Minor, whom I regarded with respect and affection. He was sort of a father figure to me.

Fort-Whiteman, on the other hand, was still an unknown quantity. My feelings about him were rather mixed. I was both repelled and fascinated by the excessive flamboyance of the man. But much later, I recalled overhearing a conversation between him and Minor during the preparations for the congress. Minor informed Fort-Whiteman that Ben Fletcher, the well-known Black IWW Leader, had expressed a desire to participate in the congress. It was evident that Bob was pleased by the response of such an important Black labor leader. Fletcher, as an IWW organizer, had played a leading role in the successful organization of Philadelphia longshoremen. His attendance would undoubtedly have attracted other Blacks in the labor movement.

Fort-Whiteman, however, vehemently opposed the idea and exclaimed, "I don't want to work with him; I know him. He's the kind of fellow who'll try to take over the whole show." That ended the discussion; Fletcher was not invited.

I didn't know Fletcher at the time, but as I reflected back on the incident some time later, it was clear to me that had he been allowed to participate, Fort-Whiteman would have been overshadowed. I was too new to pass judgment on Fort-Whiteman's qualifications, but I did wonder why he was chosen over such stalwarts as Moore and Huiswood. Huiswood, as a delegate to the Fourth Congress of the Comintern in 1922, was the first Black American to attend a congress of that body. (Claude McKay was also a special fraternal delegate to that congress.) Together with other delegates, Huiswood visited Lenin and became the first Black man to meet the great Bolshevik. He later became the first Black to serve as a candidate member of the Executive Committee of the Communist International.

On the whole, I was very optimistic during my early years in the Party—confident we were building the kind of party that would eventually triumph over capitalism.

Chapter 5

A Student in Moscow

Otto's delegation of Black students to the Soviet Union caused quite a stir in the States. The FBI kept an eye on their activities and, in late summer 1925, their departure was sensationalized in the *New York Times.*[1] The article attributed a statement to Lovett Fort-Whiteman to the effect that he had sent ten Blacks to the Soviet Union to study bolshevism and prepare for careers in the communist "diplomatic service." The article concluded with a statement calling for action against such "subversive activity."

At the time, we all felt that any Black applying for a passport would be subjected to close scrutiny. Therefore, when I learned that I too would soon be studying in Moscow, I applied for a first names of my Mother (Harriet) and Father (Haywood). This name was to stick with me the rest of my life.

Several weeks after I received my passport, I heard the FBI had been making inquiries about me. By that time, I had become known as one of the founders of the ANLC. Therefore, as the time for my departure drew near, I hid out at the home of comrades on Chicago's Westside until arrangements were made. I went to the national office of the Communist Party, then in Chicago, and was informed by Ruthenberg or Lovestone that I should get ready to leave. Political credentials, typed on silk, were sewn into the lining of my coat sleeve. In order to avoid going through the port of New York, I left by way of Canada.

In the manner of the old Underground Railroad, I was passed on from one set of comrades to the next: from Detroit, Rudy Baker, the district organizer, forwarded me on to the Canadian Party headquarters in Toronto where Jim MacDonald and Tim Buck were in charge. They sent me on to Montreal where comrades housed me and booked passage for me to Hamburg, Germany. Boarding ship in Quebec in the late spring of 1926, I sailed on the Canadian Pacific liner, the old *Empress of Scotland.* From Hamburg, I took a train to Berlin, arriving on a Saturday afternoon.

I had the address of Hazel Harrison the wife of a Chicago friend of mine who was a concert pianist studying in Berlin, where she had had her professional debut. (Years later, she was to head the Music Department at Howard University.) At that time, she was living at a boarding house near the Kurfürstendamm and I stopped there for the remainder of the weekend.

This was the first time I had been in Berlin. Germany was then emerging from post-war crisis, during which currency inflation had reached astronomical heights, resulting in the virtual expropriation of a large section of the middle class. It was common to see shabbily dressed men still trying to keep up appearances by wearing starched white collars under their patched clothing.

The owners of the boarding house, two middle-aged widows who were friends of Hazel's, showed me a trunk filled with paper notes—old German marks which were now worthless. This had probably represented a life's savings.

Hazel and her two friends took me out to the Tiergarten—the famous Berlin Zoo. I was attracted by the sight of three lion cubs that had been mothered by a German police dog. The cubs were getting big, and it was clear that the "mother" was no longer able to control them. We watched for some time, fascinated. I turned around and realized that there was a crowd around us. At first I thought they were looking at the cubs, but then it became clear that Hazel and I were the center of attention. Blacks were rare in Berlin in those days—there were only half a dozen or so, mostly from the former German colonies of the Cameroons.

Monday morning I took a cab to the headquarters of the

German Party, at Karl Marx House on Rosenthallerstrasse. It was a dour, fortress-like structure, with high walls surrounding the main building which was set in the middle. I entered into the anteroom just inside the walls, in which there were a number of sturdy looking young men lounging around. When I came in, they jumped up and stood eyeing me suspicously.

They were unarmed, but I knew their weapons were within arms' reach. This was a symbol of the times for it was not long after the Beer Hall Putsch of Hitler's brownshirts in Munich, and the battle for the streets of Berlin had already begun. I presented my credentials to a man named Walters, who was undoubtedly the head of security.

It was on this occasion that I first met Ernst Thaelmann, a former Hamburg longshoreman and then leader of the German Communist Party. He was passing through the gate and Walters stopped him and introduced us. Thaelmann spoke fairly good English (probably acquired in his work as a seaman) and we chatted a while. He asked after Foster, Ruthenberg and others. Wishing me good luck, he passed on his way.

Walters gave me some spending money and arranged for me to stay with some German comrades, a young couple who had an elaborate apartment. The husband ran a haberdashery store on Friedrichstrasse and was a commander in the *Rote Front* (the red front)—the para-military organization which the communists had organized for defense of workers against the fascists.

One day while walking down the Kurfürstendamm, I saw a cabaret billboard advertising the Black jazz band of Leland and Drayton and their Charleston dancers. It was a well-known band back in the States. I had little money, but I couldn't resist the temptation to stop in and hear them. I sat down at a table and ordered a beer. To my dismay, the waiter said they didn't sell beer, just wine. So I took the wine card and chose the cheapest bottle I could find.

A number of band members and dancers came over to my table and asked where I was going. When I told them I was a student going to Moscow, they said they had just returned from a six-month tour in Russia. They were the first Black jazz group that had gone to the Soviet Union. I asked if they had met Otto and the other Black students there. Yes, they had met them all and they had had good times together. So we all sat down to exchange news.

As we talked, I began to worry about the bill, and said I was low on money. "Oh, don't worry about that," someone said and ordered more wine. But when it came time to pay for the drinks, I got stuck with the whole tab and had to walk several miles across town to get home.

After a month in Berlin, my visa came through. I was on my way to Stettin, a city on the Baltic Sea which bordered Poland and where I boarded a small Soviet ship. After three days of some of the roughest seas I have ever experienced, we landed in Leningrad. It was April 1926, and we were already in the season of the "white nights," when daylight lasted until late into the evening.

As we entered the Gulf of Finland the following morning, we passed the naval fortress of Kronstadt about twenty miles out from Leningrad (the site of the anti-Soviet mutiny of 1920). The ship finally docked in Leningrad. Upon landing, I presented my visa and passport to the authorities. Addressing me in English, a man in civilian dress said, "Oh, you're going to the Comintern school in Moscow?"

"Yes," I replied.

He immediately took me in charge and got my baggage through customs. I assumed he was a member of the security police. We left the customs building and got into an old beat-up Packard. As we drove away from the docks, he informed me that the Moscow train would not leave until eight that evening. He put me up at a hotel where I could rest and go out to see the city.

Leningrad (old St. Petersburg) was built by Czar Peter the Great in the sixteenth century and now renamed for the architect of the new socialist society. As I walked down the now famous Nevsky Prospekt, I thought of John Reed's *Ten Days That Shook the World,* trying to recapture some of the dramatic scenes in that classic.[2] I passed the Peter and Paul Fortress and then the Winter Palace—once the home of the czars and now a museum of the people. The storming of the Winter Palace in 1917 had been the crucial event in the taking of St. Petersburg by the Bolsheviks.

The people I saw passing me on the street were plainly dressed. Many of the men wore the traditional *robochka* and high boots; others were in European dress. Most people were dressed neatly, though shabbily, and all appeared to be well-fed. They were bright and cheerful. It seemed they went about with a purpose—a sharp contrast to the atmosphere of hopelessness that had pervaded Berlin. People in Leningrad looked at me—and I looked at them. By this time, I had become used to being stared at and took it as friendly curiosity. After all, a Black man was seldom seen in those parts.

After several hours, I returned to my hotel. My friend from the security police showed up promptly at seven with my train ticket and took me to the station to put me on the train to Moscow. Filled with excitement and anticipation, I got little sleep on the train and awoke early to see the Russian landscape flowing by my window—pine forests, groves of birch trees and swamps. I was in the midst of the great Russian steppes.

When we arrived in Moscow at Yaroslavsky Station, some of my traveling companions hailed a *droshky* and told the driver to take me to the Comintern.

Moscow at last! We drove from the station into the vast sprawling city—once the capital of old Russia and now of the new. It was a bright, sunny morning and the sun glistened off the golden church domes in the "city of a thousand churches." It seemed a maze of narrow, cobblestone streets, intersected by broad boulevards. While Leningrad had been a distinctly European city, Moscow seemed a mixture of the Asiatic and the European—a bizarre and strange combination to me, but a cheerful one. Moscow was more Russian than the cosmopolitan Leningrad. Crowds swarmed in the streets in many different styles of dress.

We arrived at the Comintern, which was housed in an old eighteenth century structure on Ulitsa Komintern near the Kremlin, across the square from Staraya Konyushnya (the old stables of the czar). I paid the driver and entered the building. The guard at the door checked my credentials and directed me upstairs to a small office on the third floor. After producing my bonafides, I was told to take a seat, to wait for my comrades who would soon be coming for me.

About half an hour later, Otto and another Black man entered the room. I was overjoyed at the sight of him and his friend, who turned out to be a fellow student, Harold Williams. We embraced Russian style, and I began to feel more at home in this strange land.

Otto asked about the family. An expression of sadness crossed his face, however, when I asked him about the rest of the Black students. He then informed me of Jane Golden's serious illness. She was at that moment in a uremic coma from a kidney ailment and was not expected to live. Her husband was at her side at the hospital. (Though both were from Chicago, I had not met them before.)

The situation had saddened the whole Black student body, and for that matter, the whole school. In the course of her brief sojourn, Jane had become very popular. Otto described her in glowing terms—a real morale booster, whose spirit had helped all of them through the period of initial adjustment.

I was impressed. Here was a Black woman, not a member of the Communist Party, who had so easily become accustomed to the new Soviet socialist society. It seemed to me that there must be thousands of Black women like her in the U.S.

After we had greeted each other, we caught a *droshky* over to the school in order that I might register officially. In the course of the ride, the driver lashed his horse and cursed at him. I asked Otto what he was saying, and he gave a running translation: "Get up there, you son-of-a-bitch. I feed you oats while I myself eat black bread! Your sire was no good, you bastard, your momma was no good too!" This verbal and physical abuse, Otto told me, was typical of most Russian *droshky* drivers.

We finally arrived at the school administration which was housed in another old seventeenth century structure, built before the Revolution. It had been a finishing school for daughters of the aristocracy. Before that, it had been a boys' school where, rumor has it, the great Pushkin had studied.

Otto introduced me to the university rector with what sounded to my untrained ear like fluent Russian. We then went to the office of the chancellor, where I was duly registered. I was now a student at the *Universitet Trydyashchiysya Vostoka Imeni Stalina* (the University of the Toilers of the East Named for Stalin)—Russian acronym KUTVA. Otto and I then walked to the dormitory a few blocks away where I met the other two Black students, Bankole and Farmer.

We all immediately took a streetcar to the hospital which was located on the other side of the Moscow River. There we were met by Golden and some other students who informed us that Jane Golden had just passed away that morning. Golden seemed to be in a state of shock and the doctors had given him some sedatives. We went into the hospital morgue to view her body. Bankole broke down in uncontrollable tears. I learned afterwards that Jane had been a close friend—a kind of mother to him during the period of his adjustment to this new land.

We took Golden home to the dormitory. The school collective and its leaders immediately took over the funeral arrangements. The body lay in state in the school auditorium for twenty-four hours, during which time the students thronged past.

The funeral was held the following day and the whole school turned out. The cortege seemed a mile long as it flowed past Tverskaya towards the cemetery. The students would not allow the casket to be placed upon the cart, but organizing themselves in relays every fifty yards, insisted on carrying it the distance of several miles on their shoulders.

A good portion of the American colony in Moscow was assembled at the cemetery. The chairman of the school collective, a young Georgian, delivered a stirring eulogy at the graveside. One of the students who was standing next to me made a running translation *sotto voce* which went something like this:

> The first among her race to come to the land of socialism...in search of freedom for her oppressed peoples, former slaves... to find out how the Soviets had done it. We were happy to receive her and her comrades...condolences to her bereaved husband, our Comrade Golden, and to the rest of the Negro students...the whole university has suffered a great loss. Rest in peace, Jane Golden. You were with us only a short time, but all of us have benefitted from your presence and comradeship.

Turning to Golden, he said:

> We Soviet people and comrades of oppressed colonial and dependent countries must carry on. We pledge our undying support to the cause of your people's freedom. Long live the freedom fight of our Negro brothers in America! Long live the Soviet Union and its Communist Party, beacon light of the struggle for freedom of all oppressed peoples.

Golden had borne himself well at the graveside, but we didn't want him to return to his room in the students' dormitory, which would only remind him of his grievous loss. So we went to the apartment of MacCloud, an old Wobbly friend of ours from Philadelphia, who had attended the funeral and who lived in the Zarechnaya District, across the river. He was a close friend of Big Bill Haywood and had followed the great working class leader to the Soviet Union. There we tried to drown our sorrows in good old Russian vodka, which was in plentiful supply.

Jane Golden's funeral and the school collective's response to her death made a profound impression on me. Through these events, crammed into the first three days of my stay in the Soviet Union, I came to know something about my fellow students and the new socialist society into which I had entered.

THE BOLSHEVIKS FIGHT FOR EQUALITY OF NATIONS

KUTVA was a unique university. At the time I entered, its student body represented more than seventy nationalities and ethnic groups. It was founded by the Bolsheviks for the special purpose of training cadre from the many national and ethnic groups within the Soviet Union—the former colonial dependencies of the czarist empire—and also to train cadres from colonies and subject nations outside the Soviet Union.

The school was divided into two sections—inner and outer. At the inner section there were Turkmenians, Uzbeks, Tajiks, Bashkirs, Yakuts, Chuvashes, Kazaks, Kalmucks, Buryat-Mongols and Inner and Outer Mongolians from Soviet Asia. From the Caucasus there were Azerbaidzhanis, Armenians, Georgians, Abkhazians and many other national and ethnic groups I had never heard of before. There were Tartars from the Crimea and the Volga region.

The national and ethnic diversity found within the Soviet Union is hard to imagine. The Revolution had opened up many areas, for example through the Trans-Caucasus Road, and as late as 1928, the existence of new groups was still being "discovered." These nationalities were all former colonial dependencies of the czars and were referred to as the "Soviet East," "peoples of the East," and "borderland countries." The inner section comprised the main and largest part of the student body in the university.

We Blacks were of course part of the outer section at the school. It included Indians, Indonesians, Koreans, Filipinos, Persians, Egyptians, Arabs and Palestinian Jews from the Middle East, Arabs from North Africa, Algerians, Moroccans, Chinese and several Japanese (hardly a colonial people, but as revolutionaries, identified with the East).

The Chinese, several hundred strong, comprised the largest group of the outer section. This was obviously because China, bordering on the USSR, was in the first stage of its own anti-imperialist revolution, a revolution receiving direct material and political support from the Soviet Union. While KUTVA trained the communist cadres from China, there was also the Sun Yat-sen University, just outside of Moscow, which trained cadres for the Kuomintang.

Among its students was the daughter of the famous Christian general, Chang Tso-lin. Several Chinese, including Chiang Kai-shek's son, studied in Soviet military schools during this period. A number of the Chinese students from KUTVA were massacred by Chiang's troops at the Manchurian border when they returned to China shortly after Chiang's bloody betrayal of the revolution in 1927. Otto told me that a former girlfriend of his was among this group.

As I remember, there were no Latin Americans at KUTVA during the time I was there, and the sole black African was Bankole. The student body was continually expanding, however, and later included many students from these and other areas.

We students studied the classic works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin. But unlike the past schooling we had known, this whole body of theory was related to practice. Theory was not regarded as dogma, but as a guide to action.

In May 1925, Stalin had delivered an historic speech at the school, outlining KUTVA's purpose and its main task. His lecture was the subject of continuous discussion and study.[3] It was our introduction to the Marxist theory on the national question and its development by Lenin and Stalin.

How did the Bolsheviks transform a territory embracing one-sixth of the earth's surface—known as the "prison-house of nations" under the Czar—into a family of nations, a free union of peoples? What was the policy pursued by the Soviets which enabled them to forge together more than a hundred different stages of social development into such extraordinary unity of effort for the building of a multinational socialist state—the kind of unity that enabled them to win the civil war within and to defeat the intervention of seventeen nations, including the United States, from without.

The starting point for us was to understand that the formation of peoples into nations is an objective law of social development around which the Bolsheviks, particularly Lenin and Stalin, had developed a whole body of theory. According to this theory, a nation is an historically constituted stable community of people, based on four main characteristics: a common territory, a common economic life, a common language and a common psychological makeup (national character) manifested in common features in a national culture. Since the development of imperialism, the liberation of the oppressed nations has become a question whose final resolution would only come through proletarian revolution.[4]

The guiding principle of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union on the national question was to bring about the unity of the laboring masses of the various nationalities for the purpose of waging a joint struggle—first to overthrow czarism and imperialism, and then to build the new society under a working class dictatorship. The accomplishment of the latter required the establishment of equality before the law for all nationalities—with no special privileges for any one people—and the right of the colonies and subject nations to separate.

This principle was incorporated into the law of the land in the Declaration of Rights of the People of Russia, passed a few days after the seizure of power by the Bolsheviks. Of course, the declaration of itself did not eliminate national inequality, which as Stalin had observed, "rested on economic inequality, historically formed." To eliminate this historically based economic and cultural inequality imposed by the czarist regimes upon the former oppressed nations, it was required that the more developed nations assist these formerly oppressed nations and peoples to catch up with the Great Russians in economic and cultural development.

In pursuance of this aim, the new government was organized on a bicameral basis. One body was chosen on the basis of population alone; the other, the Council of Nationalities, consisted of representatives from each of the national territorial units—the autonomous Soviet republics, autonomous regions and national areas. Any policy in regard to the affairs of these formerly oppressed nations could be carried through only with the approval of the Council of Nationalities. The Communist Party, through its members, was involved in both bodies and worked to see that its policy of full equality and the right of self-determination was implemented.

As this theory was put into practice, we learned that national cultures could be expressed with a proletarian (socialist) content and that there was no antagonistic contradiction, under socialism, between national cultures and proletarian internationalism. Under the Soviets, the languages and other national characteristics of the many nationalities were developed and strengthened with the aim of drawing the formerly oppressed nationalities into full participation in the new society. Thus, the Bolsheviks upheld the principle of "proletarian in content, national in form." Through this policy, they hoped to draw all nationalities together, acquainting each with the achievements of the others, leading to a truly universal culture, a joint product of all humanity.

This is in sharp contrast to imperialism's policy of forcibly arresting and distorting the free development of nations in order to maintain their economic and cultural backwardness as an essential condition for the extraction of superprofits. Thus, the oppressed nations can achieve liberation only through the path of revolutionary struggle to overthrow imperialism and in alliance with the working class of the oppressor nations. Stalin, proceeding from the experience and practice of the Soviet Union, emphasized the need for the formation and consolidation of a united revolutionary front between the working class of the West and the rising revolutionary movements of the colonies—a united front based on a struggle against a common enemy. The precondition for forming such unity is that the proletariat of the oppressor nations gives:

> direct and determined support to the liberation movement of the oppressed peoples against the imperialism of its "own country," for "no nation can be free if it oppresses other nations." (Engels)....This support implies the advocacy, defense and implementation of the slogan of the right of nations to secession, to independent existence as states.[5]

Without this cooperation of peoples based on mutual confidence and fraternal interrelations, it will be impossible to establish the material basis for the victory of socialism.

The test of all this theory was being proven in practice in the Soviet Union. The experience of the Bolsheviks demonstrably proved to us that socialism offered the most favorable conditions for the full development of oppressed nations and peoples.

At the time of the Revolution, there were many nationalities within the borders of the Soviet Union in which the characteristics of nationhood had not yet fully matured, and in fact had been suppressed by the czars. It was the Soviet system itself which became a powerful factor in the consolidation of these nationalities into nations, as socialist industry and collective farming created the economic basis for this consolidation.

I observed this firsthand in the Crimea and the Caucasus during my visits there in the summers of 1927 and 1928. The languages and culture which had been stifled under the czarist regime were now being developed. The language of the Crimean people was a Turko-Tartar language, but before the Revolution, almost all education, such as there was, was in the Russian language. Now there were schools established which used the native language. Otto and other students made similar observations when they traveled to different areas of the Soviet Union.

In the meantime, I was having my own problems with the Russian language. On first hearing it, the language had sounded most strange to me. I could hardly understand a word and wondered if I would ever be able to master it. As the youngest Black American, I applied myself seriously to its study. The first hurdle was the Cyrillic alphabet—its uniquely different characters intimidated me. But the crash course at KUTVA, lasting about an hour and a half per day, soon broke down this initial barrier.

In addition, I studied on my own for a couple of hours each day. I would set out to memorize twenty new words a day. Then at night, I would write them out on a sheet of paper and pin them above the mirror in my room. I would then go over them again in the morning while shaving, and during the day I would make sure to use them in conversation with the Russians.

English grammar had always seemed irrelevant to me, but I soon came to appreciate the logic of Russian grammar. In fact, I learned most of my English grammar through the study of Russian. Its rules were consistent and understandable. The language soon ceased to be mysterious and revealed itself as being beautifully and simply constructed. In six months I was able to read *Pravda* with the help of a dictionary.

KUTVA: STRUCTURE AND STUDIES

The school structure was fairly complicated, but, as I saw it, thoroughly democratic. There was the collective, the general body which included everybody in the school—from the rector, faculty, students, clerical and maintenance workers to the scrubwoman. The leading body of the collective was the bureau—composed of representatives elected by the various groups in the university. There was also a Communist Party organization which played the leadership role at all levels.

Originally established by the Council of Nationalities, KUTVA was now a Party school, administered by the Educational Department (AGITPROP) of the Central Committee of the CPSU. There was a direct representative of the Party, called a "Party strengthener," in the school administration. Together with the rector and a representative of the students, he was part of the "troika" which constituted the top leadership of the school.

Students had the rights of citizens, voting and participating in local elections. The school discussed and dealt with all the issues which Soviet workers and peasants discussed at their work places. As with all students who pursued courses in higher education in the Soviet Union, we at KUTVA received full room and board, clothes and a small stipend for spending money. There was, of course, no tuition. We used to attend workers' cultural clubs and do volunteer work, like working Saturdays to help build the Moscow subways. Education for us was not an ivory tower, but a true integration into the Soviet society, where we received firsthand knowledge from our experiences.

The curriculum (which was a three-year course) was based on Marxism-Leninism; that is, the teachings of Marx and Engels as developed by Lenin. It included dialectical and historical materialism, the Marxist world concept; the Marxist theory of class struggle as the motive force of human events; the economic doctrines of Marx: value and surplus value, as a key to understanding history by revealing the economic law of motion of modern capitalist societies; Lenin's analysis of imperialism, the highest stage of capitalism; theory and tactics of the proletarian revolution and dictatorship of the proletariat and its Soviet state form; the problems of socialist construction; Lenin's theory on the peasant question—the alliance of workers and peasants as the base for Soviet power; the national and colonial questions; and the role of the party as vanguard of the proletariat. We also studied the specific history of the CPSU.

Our favorite teacher was Endré Sik, who taught courses on

Leninism and the history of the Soviet Party. Sik was a striking young man. His distinguishing feature was a large shock of white hair, unusual for a man so young—he was probably in his thirties. He was soft-spoken and modest. We all loved Sik; he was an outgoing person who radiated warmth.

Sik was a Hungarian, a political refugee living in Russia. He had been a soldier in the Austro-Hungarian Army during the First World War. Captured by the Russians, he was converted to Bolshevism while in a Russian prison camp. On his release, he had gone back to Hungary and participated in the short-lived (133 days) Hungarian Soviet government of 1919 of Béla Kun. With the defeat of the Béla Kun government, Sik—along with hundreds of other revolutionaries—fled to the Soviet Union. Hungarian exiles made up one of Moscow's largest foreign colonies. In Moscow, Sik pursued an academic career. He was a graduate of the Institute of Red Professors and like many Hungarian intellectuals, he was multilingual.

For all his good nature, Sik seemed tired and harassed. He was teaching in many schools, in addition to activity in the Hungarian community. Seven years after the defeat of the Hungarian Soviet, the exiled revolutionaries were bitterly divided and factionalized, laying blame on each other for the failure of the revolution.

Sik became deeply interested in the question of Blacks in the United States and undertook a serious study of the question. He read all the books available and also asked the Black students at KUTVA to join with him. Unfortunately for our personal relationship, Sik and I were to find ourselves on opposite sides of the fence in the discussion of Black Americans which took place at the Sixth Congress of the Communist International in June 1928.

Our teacher of Marxist economics was a young man by the name of Rubenstein, a Russian economist in the Gosplan (Governmental Planning Commission). The star pupil in that class turned out to be our modest friend Golden. Golden, who had known nothing about Marxism before coming to the Soviet Union, was able to grasp the intricacies of Marx's *Capital* and *Value, Price and Profit* seemingly without effort.

A class that stands out in my memory was one on how to make a revolution, to seize power once the situation was ripe. This course consisted of a series of lectures by a young Red Army officer. He had been a heroic figure in the Moscow uprising of 1917 and the subsequent seizure of power by the Bolsheviks in that city. A tall, handsome young man of bourgeois background, he had been a lieutenant in the army of the Kerensky government. Like many other soldiers, he had been won over by the Bolsheviks on the basis of their demands, which reflected the needs of the people: peace, bread and land. To him, the Moscow uprising against Kerensky, led by the Bolsheviks, was a model for the coming seizure of power in the big cities of the capitalist world.

He had a large map of Moscow on the wall and would use it to illustrate how it had been done. The call for the uprising, he said, had come to the Moscow Communist Party by telephone from Leningrad, where the revolutionary workers, sailors and army under the leadership of Lenin had overthrown the Kerensky government and seized power in that city.

In Moscow, the Party organization, already prepared, issued a call to the people for an uprising. His regiment, stationed on the outskirts of the city, together with red guards (workers' militia), responded and began to march towards the center of the city. The White Guardists were concentrated in the Arbot and in the Kremlin. Here he pointed out, in Russian and other European cities, the working class districts were centered around factories on the outskirts of the city and Moscow was circled by workers suburbs. Together with defected units of other regiments and with red guards, they marched towards Moscow's central area, whence fighting spread throughout the city—even into the trans-Moscow district. The reds finally wiped out the White Guardist strongholds, and the Kremlin, which had changed hands two times before in the fighting, finally surrendered.

Moscow was ours!

CLASSMATES AT KUTVA

Because of the language problem, we students from outside the

Soviet Union were subdivided into three main language groups: English, French and Chinese. English and French were the dominant languages of the many colonial areas represented at the university. Spanish was later added when Latin American students began to arrive. In addition to ourselves, the English-speaking group included East Indians, Koreans, Japanese and Indonesians. I had many close friends in this latter group.

One of the most interesting and brilliant was an Indian student by the name of Sakorov. (They all took Russian names because of the severe repression which they faced back home.) A former machinist in a Detroit auto plant, Sakorov had been sent to the school by the American Party.

Originally from Bombay, Sakorov had gone to sea on a British ship at the age of twelve and had been subjected to very oppressive conditions his whole career at sea. He eventually jumped ship in Baltimore and wound up working in an auto plant in Detroit. Of all the group of students, he was the closest to us Blacks. He knew first hand the plight of Blacks in the United States, and as a dark skinned Indian, he had experienced much of the same type of racial abuse while there. After he left the school, he returned to India, where he became one of the founders of the Indian Communist Party.

Later, more Indian students were to come, including one sixteen year old—a tall, lanky boy who took the name of Volkov. He had been born in California; his parents were Sikhs who had migrated to the U.S. and worked as agricultural workers in the Imperial Valley of California. They were part of a foreign contingent of the Ghadr Party, a revolutionary nationalist party of Sikhs which had been organized in 1916. The Party would pick out young men to be future leaders; Volkov was chosen and sent to Japan for education and stayed there a year. Then he was sent to study in the Soviet Union, perhaps by the Japanese Party. He spoke Japanese and English.

Among the Indian students was a group of about half a dozen Sikhs, former professional soldiers, survivors of the Hong Kong massacre of 1926. On the pretext of quelling an "imminent mutiny," the British colonel of the regiment stationed in Hong

Kong had called the unarmed Sikh soldiers into the regimental square and turned machine guns on them. (All regiments in the Indian Army included a British machine gun company as a safeguard against mutiny.) Several hundred were killed or wounded. As I understood it, the massacre was engineered to quell the protests over conditions which were being raised by members of the Ghadr Party and its supporters.

The group who arrived in Moscow were among the few who escaped over the walls; they had fled to Shanghai where they were taken in charge by M.N. Roy, an Indian and then Comintern representative to China. Roy sent them to Moscow. These students, some of them older grey-bearded men, had spent their whole lives in the British Indian Army. They represented a special problem for the school, because most of them had had very little education of any kind. They were not brought into our class, but were put into a special group under the tutelage of Volkov, Sakorov and other of the regular Indian students.

It was my good fortune to meet many of these Indian students again in 1942, when I was in Bombay as a merchant seaman. Most of them were leading figures in the Indian revolutionary movement. Sakorov had been a defendant in one of the Merut trials, having been charged with "conspiracy against the king." Since his return to India, he had spent eleven years in prison. Nada, another former schoolmate, was president of the Indian Friends of the Soviet Union and very active among the students and youth.

There were several Koreans and Japanese at the school, and two Indonesians. I remember Dirja particularly well. A Dutch-educated Indonesian intellectual, he was an old revolutionary who had spent many years in prison. There was another Indonesian, a young man (whose name I cannot recall), who later emerged as a communist leader and was killed in the Indonesian revolt of 1946.

Kemal Pasha (a party name conferred on him by Sakorov) was a grey-eyed Moroccan from the Riffian tribe of Abdul Krim. I met Kemal Pasha again in Paris during the Spanish Civil War. There were also two whites in the group—June Kroll, then the wife of an American communist leader, Carl Reeves; and Max Halff, a young English lad of Russian-Jewish parentage.

BLACKS IN MOSCOW

We students were a fairly congenial lot and in particular I got to know the other Black students quite well. Golden was a handsome, jet-Black man; a former Tuskegee student and a dining car waiter. He was not a member of the Communist Party, but was a good friend of Lovett Fort-Whiteman, head of the Party's Afro-American work.

Golden told me that his coming to the Soviet Union had been accidental. He had run into Fort-Whiteman, a fellow student at Tuskegee, on the streets of Chicago. Fort-Whiteman had just returned from Russia and was dressed in a Russian blouse and boots.

As Golden related it: "I asked Fort-Whiteman what the hell he was wearing. Had he come off the stage and forgotten to change clothes? He informed me that these were Russian clothes and that he had just returned from that country."

Golden at first thought it was a put-on, but became interested as Fort-Whiteman talked about his experiences. "Then out of the blue, he asks me if I want to go to Russia as a student. At first, I thought he was kidding, but man, I would have done anything to get off those dining cars! I was finally convinced that he was serious. 'But I'm married,' I told him. 'What about my wife?' 'Why, bring her along too!' he replied. He took me to his office at the American Negro Labor Congress, an impressive set-up with a secretary, and I was convinced. Fort-Whiteman gave me money to get passports, and the next thing I knew, a couple of weeks later we were on the boat with Otto and the others on the way to Russia. And here I am now."

He had a keen sense of humor and kidded the rest of us a lot, particularly Otto. His Southern accent carried over into Russian, and we teased him about being the only person who spoke Russian with a Mississippi accent.

Then there was Bankole, an African who spent most of his time with the Black Americans. He was an Ashanti, from the Gold Coast (now Ghana) and his family was part of the African elite.

The son of a wealthy barrister, his family had sent him to London University to study journalism. From there, he had gone to Carnegie Tech in Pittsburgh.

He had been on the road to becoming a perennial student and had planned to continue at McGill University in Montreal, but was recruited to the Young Communist League in Pittsburgh. In the States, he was confronted with a racism more blatant than any he had met before. I gathered that this had struck him sharply and had been largely responsible for his move to the left.

My brother Otto had become sort of a character in the school. He was popular among the students, who immediately translated his pseudonym "John Jones" into the Russian "Ivan Ivanovich." Otto had absolutely no tolerance for red tape, and he had become a mortal enemy of the *apparatchiki* (petty bureaucrats) in the school. He had built a reputation for making their lives miserable, and when they saw him coming, they would huddle in a corner: "Here comes Ivan Ivanovich. *Ostorozhno* (watch out)! *Bolshoi skandal budyet* (this guy will make a big scandal)!"

Harold Williams of Chicago was a West Indian and former seaman in the British merchant marine. He had adopted the name of Dessalines, one of the three leaders of the Haitian revolution of the 1790s. Williams had little formal education and some difficulty in grasping theory, but was instinctively a class-conscious guy.

Finally, there was Mahoney, whose name in the USSR was Jim Farmer. Farmer was a steelworker from East Liverpool, Ohio, a Communist Party member and had played a leading role in local struggles in the steel mills.

There were only eight of us Blacks in a city of 4,500,000 people. In addition to the six students, there were also two Black American women who had long residence (since before the Revolution) in Moscow.

I only knew one of the women, Emma Harris. We first met on the occasion of the death of Jane Golden. Emma was a warm, outgoing and earthy middle-aged woman, originally from Georgia. It was evident that she had once been quite handsome—of the type that in the old days we called a "teasin' brown." Emma had first come to Moscow as a member of a Black song and dance group, a lowly hoofer in the world of cheap vaudeville. Having been deserted by its manager, the group was left stranded in Moscow.

While the others had evidently made their way back to the States, Emma had decided to stay. She had liked the country. Here, being Black wasn't a liability, but on the contrary, a definite asset. With her drive and ambition to be "somebody," Emma parlayed this asset into a profitable position. She married a Russian who installed her, it seems, as a madam of a house of prostitution. It was no ordinary house, she once explained to me. "Our clients were the wealthy and nobility." To the former hoofer, this was status.

Such was Emma's situation in November 1917, when the Russian Bolsheviks and Red Guards moved in from the proletarian suburbs of Moscow to capture the bourgeois inner city and the Kremlin. During some mopping-up operations, Emma's house was raided by the Cheka (the security police). A bunch of White Guardists had holed up there and the whole group was arrested, including Emma. They were taken to the Lubyanka Prison and some of the more notorious White Guardists were summarily executed.

Emma remained in a cell for a few days. Finally she was called up before a Cheka official. He told her that they were looking into her case. Many of the people who had been arrested at her place were counter-revolutionaries and conspirators against the new Soviet state, and some had been shot. Emma disclaimed knowledge of any conspiracy and stated that she was engaged in "legitimate" business and had nothing to do with the politics of her clients.

"You know the only reason we didn't shoot you was because you are a Negro woman," the official said. To her surprise, he added, "You are free to go now. I advise you to try to find some useful work. Keep out of trouble."

When we met Emma, she had become a textile worker. She lived with a young Russian woman—also a textile worker, whom I suspected was a reformed prostitute—in a two-room apartment in an old working class district near *Krasnaya Vorota* (Red Gate). Soon after the first Black students arrived, she sought them out and greeted them like long lost kinfolk.

At least once a month, we students would pool part of the small stipends we received and give Emma money to shop for and prepare some old home cooking for us. On these occasions, she would regale us with stories from her past life. At times one could detect a fleeting expression of sadness, of nostalgia, for her old days of affluence. One could see that she had never become fully adjusted to the new life under the Soviets. While not openly hostile, it was clear that she was not an ardent partisan of the new regime. Knowing our sentiments, she avoided political discussion and kept her views to herself. Our feelings toward her were warmest when we first arrived, but as we developed more ties with the Russians, we went by to see her less often. But we did continue to visit her periodically; she was a sort of mother figure for us, and we all felt sorry for her. She was getting old and often expressed a desire to return to the States. She was finally able to return home after World War II.

Needless to say, Blacks attracted the curiosity of the Muscovites. Children followed us in the streets. If we paused to greet a friend, we found ourselves instantly surrounded by curious crowds—unabashedly staring at us. Once, while strolling down Tverskaya, Otto and I stopped to greet a white American friend and immediately found ourselves surrounded by curious Russians. It was a friendly curiosity which we took in stride. A young Russian woman stepped forward and began to upbraid and lecture the crowd.

"Why are you staring at these people? They're human beings the same as us. Do you want them to think that we're savages? *Eta ne kulturnya!* (That is uncultured!)" The last was an epithet and in those days a high insult.

"*Eta ne po-Sovietski!* (It's not the Soviet way!)" she scolded them.

At that point, someone in the crowd calmly responded: "Well, citizeness, it's a free country, isn't it?"

We were not offended, but amused. We understood all this for what it was.

There was one occasion when Otto, Farmer, Bankole and I were walking down Tverskaya. Bankole, of course, stood out—attracting more attention than the rest of us with his English cut Savile Row suit, monocle and cane—a black edition of a British aristocrat. We found ourselves being followed by a group of Russian children, who shouted: *"Jass Band....Jass Band!"*

Otto, Farmer and I were amused at the incident and took it in stride. Bankole, however, shaking with rage at the implication, jerked around to confront them. His monocle fell off as he shouted: *"Net Jass Band! Net Jass Band!"* As he spoke, he hit his cane on the ground for emphasis.

Evidently, to these kids, a jazz band was not just a group of musicians, but a race or tribe of people to which we must belong. They obviously thought we were with Leland and Drayton, the musicians I had met in Berlin. They had been a big hit with the Muscovites. We pulled Bankole away, "C'mon man, cut it out. They don't mean anything."

In the Soviet Union, remnants of national and racial prejudices from the old society were attacked by education and law. It was a crime to give or receive direct or indirect privileges, or to exercise discrimination because of race or nationality. Any manifestation of racial or national superiority was punishable by law and was regarded as a serious political offense, a social crime.

During my entire stay in the Soviet Union, I encountered only one incident of racial hostility. It was on a Moscow streetcar. Several of us Black students had boarded the car on our way to spend an evening with our friend MacCloud. It was after rush hour and the car was only about half filled with Russian passengers. As usual, we were the objects of friendly curiosity. At one stop, a drunken Russian staggered aboard. Seeing us, he muttered (but loud enough for the whole car to hear) something about "Black devils in our country."

A group of outraged Russian passengers thereupon seized him and ordered the motorman to stop the car. It was a citizen's arrest, the first I had ever witnessed. "How dare you, you scum, insult people who are the guests of our country!"

What then occurred was an impromptu, on-the-spot meeting, where they debated what to do with the man. I was to see many of this kind of "meeting" during my stay in Russia.

It was decided to take the culprit to the police station which, the conductor informed them, was a few blocks ahead. Upon arrival there, they hustled the drunk out of the car and insisted that we Blacks, as the injured parties, come along to make the charges.

At first we demurred, saying that the man was obviously drunk and not responsible for his remarks. "No, citizens," said a young man (who had done most of the talking), "drunk or not, we don't allow this sort of thing in our country. You must come with us to the militia (police) station and prefer charges against this man."

The car stopped in front of the station. The poor drunk was hustled off and all the passengers came along. The defendant had sobered up somewhat by this time and began apologizing before we had even entered the building. We got to the commandant of the station.

The drunk swore that he didn't mean what he'd said. "I was drunk and angry about something else. I swear to you citizens that I have no race prejudice against those Black *gospoda* (gentlemen)."

We actually felt sorry for the poor fellow and we accepted his apology. We didn't want to press the matter.

"No," said the commandant, "we'll keep him overnight. Perhaps this will be a lesson to him."

BIG BILL HAYWOOD

In addition to the students at KUTVA and the two Black women, there was a sizeable American colony in Moscow during my stay there. There were political representatives of the Communist Party USA to the Comintern, the Profintern, the Crestintern and to the departments, bureaus and secretaries of these organizations—holding jobs as translators, stenographers and researchers.[6]

Soviet cultural and publishing organizations also employed U.S. citizens, and in addition to the political groups, there were a number of technical and skilled workers who came as specialists to work for the new Soviet state. I got to know a number of the Americans during my stay, both official reps and others in the colony.

Big Bill Haywood was perhaps the most famous of these. He was organizer and founder of the IWW, and a great friend of all Blacks in Moscow. At the time I met him he was in his late fifties and quite ill, suffering from diabetes. Physically, he was only the shell of the man he had once been. He called himself a political refugee from American capitalism. As a sick man, he had fled the U.S. to avoid a ten-year frame-up prison sentence which he knew he would never have survived. Bill was blind in one eye, over which he wore a black patch. I had imagined the loss of his eye had happened in a fight with company or police thugs and was rather disappointed to learn that it was the result of a childhood accident.

In the Soviet Union he had participated in the organization of the Kuzbas Colony. This project was to reopen and operate industry in the Kuznetsk Basin in the Urals, closed during the Civil War period. The colony was located about a thousand miles from Moscow in an area of enormous coal deposits, vital to socialist industrialization. The district, with its mines and deserted chemical plants, had been established by the Soviet government as an autonomous colony. Big Bill had brought a number of American skilled workers, many of whom were old Wobblies, to reopen the plants and mines.

Big Bill became a member of the CPUSA at its founding convention in 1921, and while in the Soviet Union he was a member of the CPSU. Bill and his devoted wife, a Russian office worker, lived in the Lux Hotel—a Comintern hostelry.

His room had become a center for the gathering of American radicals, especially old Wobblies passing through or working in the Soviet Union. Here they would gather on a Saturday night and reminisce about old times and discuss current problems. Often a bunch of us Black students were present. Sometimes these sessions would carry on all night until Sunday morning. There were only a few chairs in the room, and Bill would sit in a huge armchair surrounded by people sitting on the floor. For us Blacks, listening to Big Bill was like a course on the American labor movement. He was a bitter enemy of racism, which he saw as the mainstay of capitalist domination over the U.S. working class, a continuous brake on labor unity. This attitude was reflected in the preamble of the IWW constitution, he told us. It read: "No working man or woman shall be excluded from membership in unions because of creed or color." This was borne out in practice.

The IWW was the first labor organization in modern times to invade the South and break down racial barriers in that benighted region. He recounted his experiences in the organizing drives among Southern lumber workers in Louisiana and Texas. This resulted in the organization of the Brotherhood of Timber Workers in 1910, an independent union in the lumber camps of Louisiana, Texas and Arkansas. At its height this union had 25,000 members, half of them Black.

Big Bill described how the IWW broke down discrimination at the first convention of this union. He had come from the national IWW office to speak to the convention. They were all white, he said, and he inquired why no colored men were present. He was told that the Louisiana state law prohibited meetings of Black and white—the Negro brothers were meeting in another hall nearby. Bill recalled that he then told them: "Damn the law! It's the law of the lumber bosses. Its objective is to defeat you and to keep you divided and you're not going to get anywhere by obeying the dictates of the bosses. You've got to meet together." And the latter is exactly what they did, he told us.

I remember that a few days after one of these gatherings we telephoned to tell him that we were coming over, only to learn from his wife that he had had a stroke and was in the Kremlin hospital. She said that he was getting along OK, but couldn't see visitors. After several weeks he returned home. Still weak, he received many of his friends, and many of the delegates to the Fourth Congress of the Profintern which was in Moscow at the time. Big Bill had been a leading participant in this organization since its inception.

Then suddenly, he was back in the hospital, where he died May 18, 1928. The whole American colony turned out for the funeral. There were delegations from the Russian Communist Party, of which he was a member, and from the various international organizations in which he had played a role. The Fourth Congress of the RILU adjourned its sessions, and representatives of trade unions from all over the world attended the funeral.

I'm sure for all us Black students, our meeting and friendship with this great man were among the most memorable experiences of our stay in Moscow. A stalwart son of the American working class, Bill's life and battles represented its best traditions. To Blacks, he was a man who would not only stand up with you, but if need be, go down with you. This was the iron test in the fight against the common enemy, U.S. capitalism. Big Bill obviously understood from his own experience the truth of the Marxian maxim that in the U.S., "labor in the white skin can never be free as long as in the Black it is branded."

INA

I first met my second wife, Ekaterina—Ina—in December 1926. We were both at a party at the home of Rose Bennett, a British woman who had married M. Petrovsky (Bennett), the chairman of the Anglo-American Commission of the Comintern and formerly CI representative to Great Britain.

Ina was one of a group of ballet students whom Rose had invited to meet some of us KUTVA students. She was a small young woman of nineteen or twenty, shy and retiring, and sat off removed from the party. After that party, we met several times, and she told me about herself.

She was born in Vladikavkaz (in northern Caucasus), the daughter of the mayor of the town. It was one of those towns that was taken and re-taken during the Civil War, one time by the whites, then by the reds. On one occasion when the town fell to the reds, her father was accused of collaborating with the whites. The reds came and arrested him and she never saw him again. Ina was about eleven at the time; she later learned that her father had been executed.

Her uncle was a famous artist in Moscow and after her father's execution they went there to live. Ina told me of her trip to Moscow at the height of famine and a typhus epidemic; they rode in freight cars several days through the Ukraine, and saw people dying along the road. Her uncle took charge of them and got them an apartment on Malaya Bronaya. He investigated the case of her father and discovered that a mistake had been made, and her father was posthumously exonerated. As a sort of compensation, she and her mother were regarded as "social activists," and Ina entered school to study ballet. She later transferred from the ballet school to study English in preparation for work as a translator. We lived together in the spring of 1927 and got married the following fall, after my return from the Crimea.

In January 1927, I was stunned by the news of the death of my Mother. One morning, when I was at Ina's house, Otto burst in. Overcome by emotion, he could hardly talk, but managed to blurt out, "Mom's dead!" He had a letter from our sister Eppa, with a clipping of Mother's obituary from the *Chicago Defender*.

Under the headline "Funeral of Mrs. Harriet Hall," was her picture and an article which described her, a domestic worker, as a "noted club woman." She had been a member of the Black Eastern Star and several other lodges and burial societies. The article mentioned that she was survived by her husband, daughter and two sons, the latter in Moscow.

I was overcome with grief and guilt at not being home. Deeply shocked, I had always assumed that I would return to see Mother again. Born a slave, her world had been confined to the midwest and upper South. She had once told me, "Son, I sure would like to see the ocean," and I had glibly promised, "Oh, I'll take you there someday, Momma." I felt that I had been her favorite; I was the responsible one, and yet I hadn't been able to do what I had promised. Worse yet, I wasn't even there when she died. It took me some time to get over the shock.

Chapter 6

Trotsky's Day in Court

Apart from our academic courses, we received our first tutelage in Leninism and the history of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in the heat of the inner-party struggle then raging between Trotsky and the majority of the Central Committee led by Stalin. We KUTVA students were not simply bystanders, but were active participants in the struggle. Most of the students—and all of our group from the U.S.—were ardent supporters of Stalin and the Central Committee majority.

It had not always been thus. Otto told me that in 1924, a year before he arrived, a majority of the students in the school had been supporters of Trotsky. Trotsky was making a play for the Party youth, in opposition to the older Bolshevik stalwarts. With his usual demagogy, he claimed that the old leadership was betraying the revolution and had embarked on a course of "Thermidorian reaction."[1] In this situation, he said, the students and youth were "the Party's truest barometer."[2]

But by the time the Black American students arrived, the temporary attraction to Trotsky had been reversed. The issues involved in the struggle with Trotsky were discussed in the school. They involved the destiny of socialism in the Soviet Union. Which way were the Soviet people to go? What was to be the direction of their economic development? Was it possible to build a socialist economic system? These questions were not only theoretical ones, but were issues of life and death. The economic life of the country would not stand still and wait while they were being debated.

The Soviet working class, under the leadership of Lenin and the Bolsheviks, had vanquished capitalism over one-sixth of the globe; shattered its economic power; expropriated the capitalists and landlords; converted the factories, railroads and banks into public property; and was beginning to build a state-owned socialist industry. The Soviet government had begun to apply Lenin's cooperative plans in agriculture and begun to fully develop a socialist economic system. This colossal task had to be undertaken by the workers in alliance with the masses of working peasantry.

From the October Revolution through 1921, the economic system was characterized by War Communism. Basic industry was nationalized, and all questions were subordinated to the one of meeting the military needs engendered by the civil war and the intervention of the capitalist countries.

But by 1921, the foreign powers who had attempted to overthrow the Soviets had largely been driven from Russia's borders. It was then necessary to orient the economy toward a peace-time situation. The NEP (New Economic Policy) formulated at the Tenth Party Congress in 1921 was the policy designed to guide the transition from War Communism to the building of socialism. It replaced a system of surplus appropriation with a tax in kind which would be less of a burden on the peasantry. The NEP was a temporary retreat from socialist forms: smaller industries were leased to private capital to run; peasants were allowed to sell their agricultural surplus on free markets; central control over much of the economy was lessened. All of this was necessary to have the economy function on a peace-time basis. It was a measure designed to restore the exchange of commodities between city and country which had been so greatly disrupted by the civil war and intervention. [3] It was a temporary retreat from the attack on all remnants of capitalism, a time for the socialist state to stabilize its base area, to gather strength for another advance. A year later at the Eleventh Party Congress, Lenin declared that the retreat was ended and called on the Party to "prepare for an offensive on private capital." [4]

Lenin was incapacitated by a series of strokes in 1923 and could no longer participate in the active leadership of the Party. It was precisely at this time, taking advantage of Lenin's absence, that Trotsky made his bid for leadership in the Party. Trotsky had consistently opposed the NEP and its main engineer, Lenin—attacking the measures designed to appease the peasantry and maintain the coalition between the peasants and the workers.

From late 1922 on, Trotsky made a direct attack on the whole Leninist theory of revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat. He denied the possibility (and necessity) of building socialism in one country, and instead characterized that theory as an abandonment of Marxist principles and a betrayal of the revolutionary movement. He postulated his own theory of "permanent revolution," and contended that a genuine advance of socialism in the USSR would become possible only as a result of a socialist victory in the other industrially developed states.

While throwing around a good deal of left-sounding rhetoric, Trotsky's theories were thoroughly defeatist and class-collaborationist. For instance, in the postscript to *Program for Peace,* written in 1922, he contended that "as long as the bourgeoisie remains in power in the other European countries, we shall be compelled, in our struggle against economic isolation, to strive for agreement with the capitalist world; at the same time it may be said with certainty that these agreements may at best help us to mitigate some of our economic ills, to take one or another step forward, but real progress of a socialist economy in Russia will become possible *only after the victory* of the proletariat in the major European countries."[5]

At the base of this defeatism was Trotsky's view that the peasantry would be hostile to socialism, since the proletariat would "have to make extremely deep inroads not only into feudal but also into bourgeois property relations." Thus Trotksy contended that the working class would:

> ...come into *hostile collision* not only with all the bourgeois groupings which supported the proletariat during the first stages of its revolutionary struggle, but also *with the broad masses of the peasantry* with whose assistance it came into power. The contradictions in the position of a workers'

> government in a backward country with an overwhelmingly peasant population could be solved *only* ...in the arena of the world proletarian revolution.[6]

Therefore, it would not be possible to build socialism in a backward, peasant country like Russia. The mass of peasants would exhaust their revolutionary potential even before the revolution had completed its bourgeois democratic tasks—the breakup of the feudal landed estates and the redistribution of the land among the peasantry. This line, which underestimated the role of the peasantry, had been put forward by Trotsky as early as 1915 in his article "The Struggle for Power." There he claimed that imperialism was causing the revolutionary role of the peasantry to decline and downgraded the importance of the slogan "Confiscate the Landed Estates."[7]

As it was pointed out in our classes, Trotsky portrayed the peasantry as an undifferentiated mass. He made no distinction between the masses of peasants who worked their own land (the *muzhiks*) and the exploiting strata who hired labor (the *kulaks*). His conclusions openly contradicted the strategy of the Bolsheviks, developed by Lenin, of building the worker-peasant alliance as the basis for the dictatorship of the proletariat.[8] Further, they were at complete variance with any realistic economic or social analysis.

Trotsky's entire position reflected a lack of faith in the strength and resources of the Soviet people, the vast majority of whom were peasants. Since it denied the revolutionary potential of the peasantry, the success of the revolution could not come from internal forces, but had to depend on the success of proletarian revolutions in the advanced nations of Western Europe. In the absence of such revolutions, the revolutionary process within the Soviet Union itself would have to be held in abeyance, and the proletariat, which had seized power with the help of the peasantry, would have to hold state power in conflict with all other classes.

Behind Trotsky's revolutionary rhetoric was a simplistic social-democratic view which regarded the class struggle for socialism as solely labor against capital. This concept of class struggle did not regard the struggle of peasant against landlord, or peasant against the Czar, as a constituent part of the struggle for socialism. This was reflected as early as 1905, in Trotsky's slogan, "No Czar, but a Workers' Government," which, as Stalin had said, was "the slogan of revolution without the peasantry."[9]

Given the state of the revolutionary forces at the time, the position was dangerously defeatist. For instance, 1923 marked a period of recession for the revolutionary wave in Europe; it was a year of defeat for communist movements in Germany, Italy, Poland and Bulgaria. What then, Stalin asked, is left for our revolution? Shall it "vegetate in its own contradictions and rot away while waiting for the world revolution"?[10] To that question, Trotsky had no answer. Stalin's reply was to build socialism in the Soviet Union. The Soviet working class, allied with the peasantry, had vanquished its own bourgeoisie politically and was fully capable of doing the job economically and building up a socialist society.

Stalin's position did not mean the isolation of the Soviet Union. The danger of capitalist restoration still existed and would exist until the advent of classless society. The Soviet people understood that they could not destroy this external danger by their own efforts, that it could only be finally destroyed as a result of a victorious revolution in at least several of the countries of the West. The triumph of socialism in the Soviet Union could not be final as long as the external danger existed. Therefore, the success of the revolutionary forces in the capitalist West was a vital concern of the Soviet people.

Trotsky's scheme of permanent revolution downgraded not only the peasantry as a revolutionary force, but also the national liberation movements of oppressed peoples within the old Czarist Empire. Thus, in "The Struggle for Power," he wrote that "imperialism does not contrapose the bourgeois nation to the old regime, but the proletariat to the bourgeois nation."[11]

While Trotsky de-emphasized the national colonial question in the epoch of imperialism, Lenin, on the other hand, stressed its new importance. "Imperialism," said Lenin, means the progressively mounting oppression of the nations of the world by a handful of Great Powers; it means a period of wars between the latter to extend and consolidate the oppression of nations."[12]

It was not until sometime later that I was able to fully grasp the implications of Trotsky's concept of permanent revolution on the international scene. The most dramatic example was in Spain during the Spanish Civil War, 1936-39. The Trotskyist organization had infiltrated the anarchist movement in Catalonia and incited revolt against the Loyalist government under the slogans of "Socialist Republic" and "Workers' Government." The Loyalist government, headed by Juan Negrín, a liberal Republican, was a coalition of all democratic parties. It included socialists, communists, liberal Republicans and anarchists—all in alliance against fascist counter-revolution led by Franco and backed by Hitler and Mussolini. The attempted coup against the Loyalist Government was typical of the Trotskyist attempts to short-circuit the bourgeois-democratic stage of the revolutionary process. The result was a "civil war within a civil war" and, had their strategy succeeded, it would have split the democratic coalition—effectively giving aid to the fascists.

In the United States I was to witness how Trotsky's purist concept of class struggle led logically to a denial of the struggle for Black liberation as a special feature of the class struggle, revolutionary in its own right. As a result, American Trotskyists found themselves isolated from that movement during the great upsurge of the thirties. But all this was to come later.[13]

At the time I was at KUTVA, Trotskyism had not yet emerged as an important tendency on the international scene. I did not foresee its future role as a disruptive force on the fringes of the international revolutionary movement. At that point, I wasn't clear myself on a number of these theoretical questions. It was somewhat later when my understanding of the national and colonial question—particularly the Afro-American question—deepened, that the implications of Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution became fully obvious to me.

We students felt that Trotsky's position denigrated the achievement of the Soviet Revolution. We didn't like his continual harping about Russia's backwardness and its inability to build socialism, or his theory of permanent revolution. The Soviet Union was an inspiration for all of us, a view confirmed by our experience in the country. Everything we could see defied Trotsky's logic.

His writings were readily available throughout the school, and the issues of the struggle were constantly on the agenda in our collective. These were discussed in our classes, as they were in factories, schools and peasant organizations throughout the country.

About once a month the collective would meet and a report would be given by Party representatives—sometimes local, sometimes from the *rayon* (region of the city) and Moscow district, and sometimes from the Central Committee itself. They would report on the latest developments in the inner-party struggles—Trotsky's and Lenin's views on the question of the peasantry; the NEP, how it had proved its usefulness and how it was now being phased out; Trotsky's position on War Communism and Party rules; the dictatorship of the proletariat, and whether it could be a dictatorship in alliance *with* the peasantry or one *over* the peasantry. An open discussion would be held after the report. By that time the Trotskyists at KUTVA had dwindled to a small group of bitter-enders.

The struggle raged over a period of five years (1922-27) during which time the Trotsky bloc had access to the press and Trotsky's works were widely circulated for everyone to read. Trotsky was not defeated by bureaucratic decisions or Stalin's control of the Party apparatus—as his partisans and Trotskyite historians claim. He had his day in court and finally lost because his whole position flew in the face of Soviet and world realities. He was doomed to defeat because his views were incorrect and failed to conform to objective conditions, as well as the needs and interests of the Soviet people.

It was my great misfortune to be out of the dormitory when the Black students were invited to attend a session of the Seventh Plenum of the Executive Committee of the Communist International, then meeting in the Kremlin in the late fall of 1926. I was out in the street at the time and couldn't be found, so they went without me. I missed a historic occasion, my only chance to have seen Trotsky in action. I was bitterly disappointed. When I arrived back at the dormitory, Sakorov, my Indian friend, told me where they had gone. Returning in the early hours of the morning, they found me waiting for them. They described the session and the stellar performance of Trotsky.

Stalin made the report for the Russian delegation. Trotsky then asked for two hours to defend his position; he was given one. He spoke in Russian, and then personally translated and delivered his speech in German and then in French. In all, he held the floor for about three hours.

Otto said it was the greatest display of oratory he had ever heard. But despite this, Trotsky and his allies (Zinoviev and Kamenev) suffered a resounding defeat, obtaining only two votes out of the whole body. The delegates from outside the Soviet Union didn't accept Trotsky's view that socialism in one country was a betrayal of the revolution. On the contrary, the success of the Soviet Union in building socialism was an inspiration to the international revolution.

Otto told me that this point was made again and again in the course of the discussion. Ercoli (Togliatti), the young leader of the Italian Party, summed it up well a few days later when he defended the achievements of the Russian Party and revolution as "the strongest impetus for the revolutionary forces of the world."[14]

The American Party united across factional lines in support of Stalin. The Trotsky opposition, already defeated within the Soviet Union, was now shattered internationally. From there on out, it was downhill for Trotsky. I witnessed Trotsky's opposition bloc degenerate from an unprincipled faction within the Party to a counter-revolutionary conspiracy against the Party and the Soviet state. We learned of secret, illegal meetings held in the Silver Woods outside Moscow, the establishment of factional printing presses—all in violation of Party discipline. Their activities reached a high point during the November 7, 1927 anniversary of the Revolution.

At that Tenth Anniversary, Trotsky's followers attempted to stage a counter-demonstration in opposition to the traditional celebration. I remember vividly the scene of our school contingent marching on its way to Red Square. As we passed the Hotel Moscow, Trotskyist leaflets were showered down on us, and orators appeared at the windows of the hotel shouting slogans of "Down with Stalin."

They were answered with catcalls and booing from the crowds in the streets below. We seized the leaflets and tore them up. This attempt to rally the people against the Party was a total failure and struck no responsive chord among the masses. It was equivalent to rebellion and this demonstration was the last overt act of the Trotskyist opposition.

During the next month Trotsky, Kamenev and Zinoviev were expelled—along with seventy-five of their chief supporters. They, along with the lesser fry, were sent in exile to Siberia in Central Asia. Trotsky was sent to Alma Alta in Turkestan from where, in 1929, he was allowed to go abroad, first to Turkey and eventually to Mexico.

Later, many of Trotsky's followers criticized themselves and were accepted back into the Party. But among them was a hard core of bitter-enders, who "criticized" themselves publicly only in order to continue the struggle against Stalin's leadership from within the Party. Their bitterness fed on itself and they emerged later in the thirties as part of a conspiracy which wound up on the side of Nazi Germany.

Throughout this whole struggle, we Black students at the school had been ardent supporters of the position of Stalin and the Central Committee. Most certainly we were Stalinists—whose policies we saw as the continuation of Lenin's. Those today who use the term "Stalinist" as an epithet evade the real question: that is, were Stalin and the Central Committee correct? I believe history has proven that they were correct.

RUTHENBERG'S DEATH

In March 1927, the American community in Moscow was shocked by the news of the death of Ruthenberg, general secretary of the CPUSA. His death came suddenly, from a ruptured appendix. His last request had been that he be buried in the Kremlin walls in Moscow—a request acceded to by the Russian Communist Party. His ashes were carried to Moscow by J. Louis Engdahl, a member of the Central Committee of the U.S. Party.

The Moscow funeral was impressive. The procession entered Red Square led by a detachment of Red Cavalry. The square was crowded with thousands of Soviet workers, including the entire work force of the Ruthenberg Factory, which had been named in his honor.

We half dozen Black students, together with other members of the American colony, marched into the square immediately behind the urn. We followed it until we stood directly in front of the Lenin Mausoleum. On top of the mausoleum was the speakers' platform. There stood Bukharin, who had recently succeeded Zinoviev as head of the Communist International: Béla Kun, leader of the abortive Hungarian Soviet of 1919; Sen Katayama, the veteran Japanese Communist; and others.

Bukharin delivered the main eulogy, followed by several speakers. Suddenly I noticed Bukharin whispering to Robert Minor, who was standing beside him. Bukharin pointed down towards our group of Blacks who were gathered below the mausoleum.

As Minor came down the steps toward us, I was a bit apprehensive, anticipating his mission. Sure enough, addressing my brother Otto, he said, "Comrade Bukharin wants one of the Negro comrades to say a few words."

Otto pointed at me and said, "Let Harry speak."

I felt trapped, not wanting to start an argument on such a solemn occasion. I reluctantly agreed to speak and followed Minor back up the steps of the mausoleum. Béla Kun, a polished orator, was speaking; I was to follow. I tried to gather my thoughts, but I was not much of a speaker and certainly not prepared.

Generalities did not come easy to me, and besides, I hadn't really known Ruthenberg. I had only met him formally on the occasion of my departure for Moscow when he had shaken my hand and wished me luck. But what could I say about him, specifically in relation to the Blacks?

I stood there amidst this array of internationally famous revolutionary leaders, and as I looked down on the thousands of faces in Red Square, panic suddenly seized me. Here was my turn to speak, but I found myself unable to utter a coherent sentence.

I remember saying something about "our great lost leader." This being my first experience in front of a mike, the words seemed to come back and hit me in the face. Finally, after a minute or two of floundering around I said, "That's all!" and turned away from the mike in disgust and humiliation. The words "that's all" resounded through the square loud and clear, to my further discomfiture.

And then came the moment for the translation. The translator was a young Georgian named Tival, one of Stalin's secretaries. He was one of those people who speak half a dozen languages fluently. Tival got right into the job of translation, assuming an orator's stance. He had a strong roaring voice, surprising for one of such diminutive stature.

Swinging his arms, apparently emphasizing points that I was supposed to have made, I must admit that he made a pretty good speech for me. Speaking two or three times longer than my two minutes of rambling, he preceded each point by emphasizing, *"Tovarishch Haywood skazal"* (Comrade Haywood said).

The next morning, I went to the school cafeteria for breakfast. And there sat our little group of Black students. Golden had them laughing at something. He saw me and waved the day's copy of *Pravda.* The headline was *"Pokhorony Tovarishcha Ruthenberga"* (Funeral of Comrade Ruthenberg).

Golden began reading with a straight face, but using that peculiar language of his—Russian with a Mississippi accent. The article quoted from the main speeches and went on to say, *Tovarishch Harry Haywood, Americanski Negr, tozhe bystupal* (Negro American comrade Harry Haywood also stepped forward with a speech)."

And Golden read one paragraph after another of the speech Tival gave for me, each paragraph starting with *"Tovarishch Haywood skazal...Tovarishch Haywood skazal...Tovarishch*

Haywood skazal."

Finally Golden looked up from that paper at me, and he said, "Man, you know you ain't skazaled a goddamned thing!"

Back home in the U.S., the death of Ruthenberg had signalled another flareup in the factional struggle within the Party. Following the intervention of the CI at the Fourth Party Convention, there was a period of uneasy peace between the factions. But now a struggle for succession to Ruthenberg's position as general secretary was raging hot and heavy.

Lovestone, who had been organizational secretary, was supported by the Ruthenberg stalwarts—Max Bedacht, Ben Gitlow and John Pepper. Since Ruthenberg's death, Lovestone (as heir apparent) had pre-empted the interim job of acting secretary. In opposition, William W. Weinstone was the candidate supported by the Foster-Cannon bloc which included Alexander Bittelman and Jack Johnstone.

Weinstone had formerly been a member of the Ruthenberg faction, but following Ruthenberg's death, he sought the position of general secretary himself. His move offered an opportunity for the Foster-Cannon group to oppose Lovestone, whom they bitterly detested, with a candidate they believed had more of a chance of winning than did one of their old stalwarts.

We Blacks in Moscow were isolated from much of this struggle. We were sort of observers from the sidelines, and with the exception of Otto (who had entered the Party immediately after its founding convention), we didn't have any of the old factional loyalties or political axes to grind. We generally favored the Ruthenberg leadership, although we could hardly be called ardent supporters.

Ruthenberg's leadership had been endorsed by the CI, which gave his followers credence in our view. But Lovestone was something else again. On this, even Otto agreed. Lovestone had a reputation for being a factionalist par excellence, involved in the dirty infighting that took place. He was regarded as a hatchet man for the Ruthenberg group.

None of us in Moscow could discern any principled political differences between the two groups on the question uppermost in our minds—the question of Black liberation. Though we had not yet fully succeeded in relating our newly acquired Marxist-Leninist perspective to the question of Blacks in the U.S., we were sure—and our studies had confirmed—that Blacks were a potentially powerful revolutionary force in the struggle against U.S. capital. Clearly the common enemy could not be defeated without a revolutionary alliance of Blacks and the class-conscious elements of the working class. It was crucial to us that Party policy be directed towards consummating that alliance. We felt, however, that both factions underestimated the revolutionary potential of Blacks and we were determined not to allow ourselves to become a political football between the two.

There had been no progress in this area since the folding of the American Negro Labor Congress in 1925. The collapse of the ANLC for us confirmed the Party's isolation from the Black masses. According to James Ford, a young Black Party leader, there were only about fifty Blacks in the Party at this time.[15]

Something was definitely wrong. At the time, we were inclined to attribute the Party's shortcomings simply to an underestimation of the importance of Afro-American work. We were not, at that point, able to discern any theoretical tendencies within the Party which served to rationalize this underestimation. We felt it was due simply to hangovers of racial prejudices of white Party members and leaders.

In Moscow, we had been in constant communication with Black comrades in the U.S. We had, in fact, set ourselves up as a sort of unofficial lobby to keep the situation with respect to Blacks continuously before the attention of the Russians and other Comintern leaders. They, for the most part, were sympathetic to our grievances.

In May 1927, Jay Lovestone (while still acting secretary of the Party) showed up in Moscow at the CI's Eighth Plenum. During his stay, he invited us Black students to his room at the Lux Hotel to give us an informal report on the Party's work among Blacks. He had heard, of course, of our discontent and wanted to mollify us. He also knew that the question was coming up for serious discussion at the Sixth Congress of the Communist International, which was to take place the following year. There was no doubt he was out to mend his political fences.

I had my first close look at the man when we gathered in his room. He tried to give us the impression of being very frank and self-critical. He said the Party leadership, involved in factional struggles, had neglected Black struggles, had neglected Afro-American work, an "important phase" of the Party's activities. But this factional phase had now at long last come to a close and the Party (under his leadership) had now begun seriously to tackle the job of overcoming this tremendous lag in the work.

He told us that Otto Huiswood had been placed on the Central Committee and assigned as organizer for the Buffalo (western New York) district. We thought it was about time! Richard B. Moore had been placed as New England organizer for the International Labor Defense. "I cite this," Lovestone said, "only as an earnest example of the determination of the Central Committee to remedy our default on this most important question."

Assuming a modest air, he turned to me and said, "Last but not least, we have decided that you, Harry, as one of our bright young Negroes, are to be transferred to the Lenin School. We've had our eye on you, Harry, for some time."

I was delighted at this news. The Lenin School had been established only the year before (1926) as a select training school for the development of leading cadres of the parties in the Communist International. But though I was delighted, I was also suspicious of the man; his cold eyes belied the warmth and modesty he tried to express. It seemed like a bid to buy me out. Otto, however, seemed to have been impressed.

Though Lovestone was a teetotaler, he had a big bottle of vodka in his room for us students. He had brought us presents—which was true of most visitors from the States. It was understood that a visitor would not return to the U.S. with extra things that the students in Moscow could use. Most people, and Lovestone was no exception, came prepared with things to give away. During the course of the evening, Otto had seized a few pair of socks, and Lovestone had given him a tin of pipe tobacco (and cigarettes for us all). As we were leaving, Otto looked over Lovestone's shoes.

"Say, Jay," he said, "you and me wear the same size shoes, don't we? You got another pair with you?"

"Sure, Otto, sure," said Lovestone, and produced an extra pair.

On our way home, walking down Tverskaya Boulevard towards the dormitory, we exchanged our impressions of the evening. Golden started off: "Oh, he's full of crap. There's no sincerity in the man."

Otto responded, "I think you're wrong, Golden, I think you're wrong."

Golden said, "I saw his eyes. That's something you didn't see, Otto. You had too much vodka. You know I've always told you to go light on it—you know you can't handle the stuff. You remember what Vesey's lieutenant said when the slaves rebelled in Virginia: 'Beware of those wearing the old clothes of the master, for they will betray you!' "

I never saw Otto so furious! He turned on Golden with his fists clenched, but thought better of it. Golden was too big. I laughed, and he turned towards me, but I was his brother. At that moment a drunk Russian staggered into view and suddenly bumped into him.

Otto let his fist go and knocked the poor man down. There was a great commotion and a crowd of Russians gathered around. Some Chinese students from our school were across the street, and thinking we were being attacked by "hooligans," rushed to our defense. We helped the man to his feet and, in the confusion, attempted to explain to the crowd what had happened. Otto said he had thought the drunk was attacking him, and it was thus that we managed to pass the thing off and return to our dorm.

Lovestone was a consummate factionalist, utterly uninhibited by scruples or principles. He finally won out in the struggle to succeed Ruthenberg, but the mantle of Ruthenberg fit him poorly; the cloven hoof was always visible. His victory was aided by the ineptitude of the Foster-Cannon-Weinstone bloc, which made several tactical blunders (of which Lovestone took full advantage). Lovestone's friendship with Bukharin was perhaps a factor in his victory; Nikolai Bukharin had succeeded Zinoviev as the president of the Comintern. He was an erstwhile ally of Stalin in the struggle against the Trotskyist "Left" and was later to emerge as a leader of the right deviation within the Soviet Party and the Communist International. As head of the Comintern, he already had begun to line up forces for his next battle which was to break out following the Sixth Congress of the CI in 1928. His man in the U.S. was none other than Jay Lovestone.

As I have indicated, we KUTVA students in Mosccow were removed from much of the bitterness of the post-Ruthenberg struggle, and at the time, were not fully aware of its intensity. I was to be filled in with a blow-by-blow account of what went on at home by some of my classmates at the Lenin School, which I entered the following autumn.

VACATION IN THE CRIMEA

The month of August, vacation time, drew near. Our group of Black students split up and all of us (with the exception of Bankole) left Moscow. Bankole was reluctant to leave his Russian girl friend and remained in the city. Golden's girl friend, a pretty Kazakhstanian girl, took him home to meet her people in Kazakhstan, an autonomous republic in southwest Asia, inhabited by a Turko-Mongolian people.

As for myself, I asked for and received permission to spend my vacation in the Crimea. At the Chancellor's office, I was given money, a railroad ticket and a document entitling me to stay one month at a rest home in Yalta. I was on my own and for the first time since my arrival fourteen months before, I was separated from my fellow Black students. But I had no misgivings. By this time, I had acquired a considerable knowledge of the country and had overcome the main hurdles in the language and could speak and read Russian with some fluency. In fact, I looked forward to my journey with pleasurable expectations. I was not to be disappointed.

The Autonomous Republic of Crimea is a square-shaped peninsula jutting out into the Black Sea. At that time, it was one of the two Tartar autonomous republics; the other was Tartaria, on the Volga. I immediately fell in love with the country—its lush subtropical climate and its people. The Tartars were a dark-skinned Mongolic people, descendants of the Golden Horde of Genghis Khan. When I arrived in Sevastopol, the largest city and seaport, I was struck by the dazzling brilliance of the sun against the pastel-colored buildings, the deep blue of the sea and the verdant Crimean mountains rising behind the city. Tall and stately cypress trees lined the streets. It was a busy seaport; all types of shipping could be found in the harbor from small fishing boats to Black Sea passenger liners and ocean-going freighters of the Soviet trading fleet.

As a history buff, I stopped over for a couple of days to take in the historic sites of the city and its environs. There was the Panarama, a life-like display graphically depicting the battle of Sevastopol during the Crimean War, 1854-66. (The war was fought mainly on the Crimean peninsula between Russian forces on the one hand; British, French and Turkish allies on the other.) In this battle, the allies sought to knock out the strong Russian naval base in Sevastopol through an invasion by land and bombardment by sea. The Russians lost the war, but Sevastopol remained Russian.

I drove out to Balaklava, a small village nestling on the sea a few miles southeast of Sevastopol, the scene of the disastrous charge of the British "Light Brigade," led by Lord Cardigan and immortalized by Tennyson in his poem. Looking at the scene brought back memories of childhood school days when our class recited Tennyson's poem aloud. I stood on Voronsov Heights overlooking the Valley of Death into which rode the six hundred. I walked over the grounds and viewed the graves of the victims of this blunder of the British officer caste. Fourteen years later, Sevastopol was to be the site of one of the most destructive and bloody battles of World War II.

My automobile ride to Yalta, about sixty kilometers further along the coast, was not only exciting, but in some parts, a frightening experience. It was mostly along a narrow road, cut out of the side of mountains, on which two cars could barely pass. In some places, one could look down to what appeared to me to be a sheer drop of two or three thousand feet into the sea below. The chauffeurs driving powerful Packards, Cadillacs and Espano-Swiss sped along the road with its many curves at breakneck speed. The obvious fact that they were expert drivers was not enough to allay my fears nor those of the other passengers.

Nearing Yalta, we passed Lavadaya, a beautiful palace built by an Italian architect during the reign of Alexander the Third. It was situated on a high cliff overlooking the sea. Later, it became the summer home of Czar Nicholas II. Now, under the Soviets, it had been converted into a rest home for local peasant leaders. The palace later housed President Roosevelt and Premier Churchill during the Yalta conference in 1945.

At last I arrived in Yalta, center of the great Crimean resort area which extended along the coast and behind which rose the Crimean Mountains. Yalta was a town of rest homes and sanitaria, mostly owned by Soviet trade unions. I was put up at a rest home which mainly housed employees of the Moscow city administration.

Immediately after registering, I put on my bathing trunks and donned the gorgeous Ashanti robe which Bankole had lent me and stepped out for a dip in the sea. I stepped out into the main street which ran alongside the seashore and headed for the beach. Although many of the Tartars of the area were dark-skinned, Blacks were rarely seen, even in these southern climes.

As I passed along I could hear remarks like, "*Kak khorosho zagorelsya* (How beautifully sunburnt he is)!" It was a remark I was to hear often. It was good natured, and I sensed in it a trace of envy.

The crowds were mainly vacationers from the north, who after the long, weary and cold sub-arctic winters of central Russia had fled to this semi-tropical paradise to soak up a little sunshine. Here they formed a cult of sun-worshippers bent on acquiring a suntan to display upon their return home.

A crowd of small boys followed me out to the public beach a few blocks away. Perhaps they associated me with some of the South Sea Island characters they had seen in movies and waited expectantly for an exhibition of my aquatic skills. I doffed my gorgeous robe and stepped into the water, walked out a few feet and sat down. I turned to see expressions of amazement, disappointment, and even pity. Their bewilderment was quite natural, for I myself had never met a Russian who didn't know how to swim. These children regarded swimming to be a natural human attribute; to them, an adult who couldn't swim was regarded as sort of a cripple.

One day, while walking to the beach in Yalta, I was approached by a uniformed officer of the OGPU (federal police). *"Bonjour, camarade, vous êtes Sénégalais?"* he asked in French.

He seemed a bit surprised when I responded in Russian, telling him that I was an American Black and a student at KUTVA in Moscow.

He said that he had noticed me several times on the streets and wondered if I were Senegalese. He had fought beside Senegalese riflemen during the world war. His Cossack regiment, he explained, was a part of a small Russian expeditionary force sent to fight with the French Army on the Western Front.

I told him that I had also fought in the war with an American Black regiment and how I had seen Russian troops in a prison camp on my way to the Soissons front in the late summer of 1918. I asked him if he had been in that camp.

He shrugged and said that it was quite possible. "They scattered us around in a number of camps; they didn't want too many of us together in one place," he said.

"Our Russian force," he went on, "was small and had no real military significance." It had been sent by the Czar as a demonstration of solidarity and friendship between Russia and France—sort of a morale booster for the French people.

"Be that as it may," he said, "it didn't boost our morale any to be there. In France, we fought in some of the toughest battles in the war, on the Champagne front and the Marne salient, and we suffered heavy casualties. Our fellows were homesick and confused, and didn't know what they were fighting for so far away from Mother Russia.

"There was much grumbling and always an undercurrent of discontent. All of this was heightened towards the latter part of the war by the bad news of Russian defeats on the Eastern Front. This all came to a head with the news of the fall of the Czar. Shortly after that we were withdrawn from the front by the French, as an unreliable element. Behind the lines, we were surrounded and disarmed by Senegalese troops, and quite a number who resisted were killed or wounded. To say that we were 'unreliable' was an understatement; by that time, we were downright mutinous!"

The Bolshevik Party had active nuclei in the regiments. "I myself was a member of the Party," said my new-found friend. "We followed the course of the Revolution through French newspapers and were able to glean the truth behind their distortions. We also had contact with some of the French left-socialists and with Bolshevik exiles before they returned home after the outbreak of the February Revolution. After the Armistice was signed, we were sent to Morocco and eventually Soviet ships came to take us to Odessa and home.

"The French used the Senegalese against us," he said. "We learned later of a mutiny among the Senegalese troops in which they were shot up and disarmed by the French Blue Devils." I had just been reading André Barbusse and was surprised to learn how widespread mutiny had been in the French Army.

"Well, c'est la guerre," he said, "especially so an imperialist war. After all, what interest had the Senegalese in defending French imperialism? What interest did we Russian workers and *muzhiks* (peasants) have in fighting the Czar's wars?"

We parted, with both of us wanting to meet again, but he had to leave town that evening and I never saw him again.

Often, we visited the local vineyards and wine cellars and tasted the local wines. It was wine country and Crimean wines were of the first quality, from the sweet ports, tokays and muscatels, to the dry red and white wines. On these outings there was always someone who had a guitar or accordion, and we sat late into the nights singing Russian folk songs and gypsy romans (love songs).

The Crimea was not just a vacationers' haven, although tourism occupied a large place in its economy. At that time, the economy was mainly agricultural. Vineyards were constantly expanding in the mountain valleys along the southern coast. Tobacco of fine quality was grown, and there was also an important fishing industry.

On the east coast of the peninsula near Kerch, there was an area of rich iron ore deposits and mines. This was to serve as the basis for the construction of the gigantic Kerch metallurgical, chemical and engineering works, contemplated in the first five year plan. It was a plan which sought to quadruple the basic capital of the republic.

With the renaissance of national cultures which accompanied the Soviet policy on the national question, the Turkic language spoken by the Tartars—which I understood was closely related to modern Turkish—was being revived and taught in schools. A Latinized alphabet was introduced, replacing the old Arabic script. Tartar literature and culture flourished through this encouragement.

I met the Party secretary for the county, a young Tartar who took me to visit a *kolkhoz* (collective farm), a vineyard in this case. A hundred or more peasant families were in the collective, all winegrowers. As in all collective farms, its members were required to sell a definite amount to the government at fixed prices and were allowed to sell the surplus on the free markets.

Each family had a special plot of land which they cultivated for their own food supply. The chairman of the collective was a huge Ukrainian fellow, who showed us around and explained the winegrowing process. The cultivation of grapes and making of the wine required special knowledge, which the government supplied.

The members of the collective used up-to-date wineries owned by the state and managed by expert vintners. There I was to view the intricate process of wine-making, the pressing of the grapes, the fermenting process and the bottling itself. As I remember, this particular collective specialized in dry wines—both red and white. The Crimeans insisted that their wines were as good as the French. Not being a connoisseur, I wouldn't know, but all I can say is that they tasted good to me.

When I returned to Moscow in the fall, Otto told me of the discovery he had made on one of his trips to the southern region of the Caucasus. He had originally gone there on the invitation of one of our fellow students, a young woman from the Abkhazian Republic, a part of Georgia. After meeting some of us, she commented that they too had some Black folk down near her area in a village not very far from Sukhum, the capital of the republic on the Black Sea.

She invited Otto down to visit the region over his summer vacation, and there he met the people. He described them as being of definite black ancestry—notwithstanding a history of intermarriage with the local people. But the *starsata* (old man) of the tribe was Black beyond a doubt. His story went some generations back, when he and the others joined the Turkish army as Numidian mercenaries from the Sudan. After several forays into this region they deserted the Army and had settled there. The *starsata* himself had been in the Czar's Cavalry with the *Dikhi* (wild) Division of the Caucasus Cossacks.

The people in the village wanted to know what was happening to "our brothers over the mountains." Otto related to them the troubles we had gone through, described the travels "over the mountains and across the big sea." As the evening wore on and the local brandy was consumed, toast after toast was drunk to "our little brother from over the hills." Otto described to them the conditions of Blacks in the U.S.—the lynchings, racism and brutality. Incensed, a few jumped up and pulled out their daggers. "You should make a revolution."

"Why don't you revolt?"

"Why do you put up with it?"

We were not the only ones surprised to learn about this group; it was news to the Russians in Moscow too! Several of these tribesmen later visited Moscow as a result of Otto's visit.

Chapter 7

The Lenin School

Following my summer in the Crimea, I returned to Moscow in the fall of 1927 to attend the Lenin School. The school was located off the Arbot on what is now called Ambassadors' Row, a few blocks down the inner ring of boulevards from the KUTVA dormitories.

The Lenin School, which was set up by the Comintern, opened in Moscow in May 1926. The plans for the school, formally called the International Lenin Course, had been reported on the previous year by Béla Kun, then head of the Educational (Agitprop) Department of the Comintern. Accordingly, the school was to train sixty to seventy qualified students both in theoretical and practical subjects, which included observations of Soviet trade unions and collective farm work. It offered a full three-year course and a short course of one year.

It was a school of great prestige and influence within the international communist movement. Its students, mainly party functionaries of district and section level and some secondary national leaders who could be spared for the period of study, were generally at a higher level of political development than the students at KUTVA.[1]

I was the first Black to be assigned to the school. Others followed later; including H.V. Phillips in 1928, Leonard Patterson in the thirties, and Nzula—a Zulu intellectual and national secretary of the South African Communist Party.

The American students who entered the Lenin School in the fall of 1927 were an impressive lot. They included prominent Party leaders from the national and district level. Outstanding in the group was Charles Krumbein, a member of the Central Committee of the Party and formerly in charge of trade union work in Chicago and district organizer for Chicago. A steamfitter by trade and a charter member of the Party, he was one of a group of young trade unionists who made up the Chicago Party leadership in the twenties. They were the best representatives of the radical tradition of that city's labor movement.

Modesty and honesty were hallmarks of Charlie's character, and he was a man of exceptional organizational and administrative ability. He was a founder of the Trade Union Education League (TUEL) and played a key role in the Chicago Federation of Labor. We developed a close and lasting friendship, and I learned a lot from him about Party history and the background of the revolutionary movement in the United States.

Margaret Cowl, Charlie's wife, was a capable Party leader and organizer. She had worked in the TUEL and was recognized particularly for her leadership in the struggle for unity of Pennsylvania's anthracite coal miners in 1927. Later she was to head up the Party's Women's Commission and play an active role in the movement for a Woman's Charter, a broad united front movement launched in 1936 which asserted the rights of women to full equality in all spheres of activity. Margaret also energetically mobilized support for the struggles of women wage workers in the needle trades, textile, electrical and other industries.

Joseph Zack had emigrated to the U.S. from Eastern Europe shortly after the First World War. Active in the first communist organization in New York, he had been section organizer of Yorktown and served on the Party's Trade Union Commission. Zack was one of Foster's leading trade union cadres in New York and had also been one of the first New York Party members assigned to work among Blacks. He was a bitter enemy of Lovestone, but was also critical of Foster. In 1932, he was expelled from the Party for refusing to abide by democratic centralism and by the forties had become an informant for the Dies Committee on Un-American Propaganda Activities.

Morris Childs, a Chicagoan, was a leader in trade union and Party work. He became Illinois D.O. in the thirties at the same time that I was chairman of the Cook County Committee and secretary of the Southside region. While at the Lenin School, he served as the representative of the American students to the School Bureau.

Rudy Baker, a Yugoslav comrade who later became D.O. in Pittsburgh and in Detroit, and Lena Davis (Sherer), a good friend of mine who was organizational secretary for New York in the thirties, were also at the school. All of these students were members of the Foster group. As far as I can recall, the sole Lovestone supporter in our class was Gus Sklar of Chicago, a leader in the Russian Federation.

Poor Gus was alone in the midst of Fosterites, and it must have been an unhappy experience for him. When Lovestone was expelled from the Party in 1929, Gus remained in the Soviet Union and never returned to the U.S. He served as an officer in the Red Army and was killed in the defense of Moscow during the Second World War.

The American students at the Lenin School were all experienced leaders of the U.S. Party. One might ask why so many were spared from U.S. work at a time when the Party's position among the masses was so weak.

Actually, these students were victims of Lovestone's purge of the Party apparatus following his victory at the Fifth Party Convention in 1927. Part of Lovestone's strategy was to weaken his opposition on the home front by "exiling" some of its leaders to the Lenin School.

His plan backfired however. In Moscow, these "exiles," as they jokingly called themselves, were to become an effective lobby against Lovestone both in the Comintern and in the CPSU. The political winds were changing.

From the ashes of the defeated Trotskyist "left " rose an equally dangerous, organized and secret rightist opposition headed by none other than Lovestone's patron in the Comintern, Nikolai Bukharin. On the home front, this rightist opposition had its social base among the capitalists, the landlords and the kulaks (upper peasantry) and pushed a line that would have lopsidedly developed industry along consumer lines, to the detriment of the vast masses of Soviet people. Internationally, Bukharin greatly underestimated the war danger and the potentially revolutionary situation then developing on a world scale. At the same time, he greatly overestimated the strength and resiliency of imperialism.

The Lenin School students helped to legitimize the anti-Lovestone struggle in the U.S. Party by linking it up with the fight against the right deviation, then only in its incipient stage. The Lenin School was to become a strong point in the fight against this danger.

There were several other American students who had entered the Lenin School the year before. This group included Clarence Hathaway, Tom Bell, Max Salzman and Carl Reeves (the son of Mother Bloor).[2] Of this group, Hathaway had the most imposing credentials. A machinist from Minneapolis and one of the leading people in the Trade Union Education League, Hathaway proved to be a valuable asset in the Party's trade union work.

He was a fine organizer and speaker, particularly effective in debates, and combined these talents with a good grasp of Marxist-Leninist theory. Clearly destined for top leadership in the Party, he later served as D.O. of the New York District, became an editor of the *Daily Worker* and a member of the Political Bureau. Tom Bell, Hathaway's close friend, remained in the Soviet Union, married a Russian woman and died sometime before World War II.

William Kruse of Chicago was the principal Lovestonite in the school. For a brief period he filled in as acting rep from the Party to the Comintern in the absence of a permanent Party rep. Later, he was D.O. in Chicago under Lovestone's leadership and was expelled from the Party with Lovestone in 1929.

The students were organized at the school by language groups, as we had been at KUTVA. In this case, the languages were English, German, French, Spanish, Italian, Russian and, later, Chinese. The whole school was a collective, comprising students, teachers, administrators and employees. The leading body was the

Party Bureau, which included delegates from the various groups, including the employees. All students transferred membership from their home party to the CPSU, and were directly subject to its discipline. Party meetings were held about once a month.

Our rector was a handsome, energetic woman named Kursanova. She was a leading communist educator and was married to the old Bolshevik propagandist and CC member, E. Yaroslavsky. She was about forty at the time and had an impressive background, including civil war experiences as a machine-gunner in a detachment of Siberian partisans. Kursanova had also been a delegate to the Bolshevik Conference in April 1917 which adopted Lenin's famous April Theses.[3]

In addition to the Americans, others in the English-speaking section included British, Irish, Australians, a New Zealander, two Chinese, two Japanese and two Canadians—Leslie Morris and Stewart Smith. The British group included Springhall, Tanner, Black (a Welshman), Margaret Pollitt and George Brown. My special friend among the British was Springhall, known to all as "Springy," with whom I roomed at the Lenin School.

Springy was a British naval veteran of the First World War. He had come from a poor family and his parents had chosen him for a naval career. This latter act, it seemed, was a common practice among British lower class families with several sons. At the age of twelve, therefore, he had been "given" to His Majesty's Navy to be trained as a sailor. He served through the First World War and after the Armistice was involved in a mutiny or near-mutiny among members of the fleet who protested being sent to Leningrad to intervene against the Bolshevik Revolution. At the time, Springy was about twenty-one years old. As a result of the mutiny, he was cashiered from the Navy. Apparently, the admiralty was deterred from taking any harsher measures against the mutineers because of the widespread sympathy their action had evoked among British workers.

Springy was popular with everybody, particularly among the women on the technical staff. After leaving the Lenin School, he returned to England where he rose rapidly in Party leadership. He also fought in Spain as a member of the Fifteenth International

Brigade and was wounded at Jarama.

At the beginning of World War II, he served as organizational secretary of the British Party. During the early stages of the war, Springy was charged by the Churchill government with subversive activity among the armed forces. This was during the period prior to the German invasion of the Soviet Union, when the war was still an imperialist war and we communists opposed it.

There was no defense against the charge of subversion in wartime England, and Springy was sentenced to seven years in prison. After his release, he went to China, where he did editorial work on English language publications until his death from cancer in 1953. Springy died in a Moscow hospital, where he had been sent by his Chinese comrades to make sure that everything possible could be done to save him. His ashes were returned to China and interred with a memorial stone in the Revolutionary Martyrs' Cemetery outside Peking.

Springy introduced me to the gifted English writer, historian and Marxist scholar, Ralph Fox. A promising young theoretician, Fox was then researching material for one of his books at the Marx-Engels Institute. He died at the age of thirty-seven, fighting the fascists on the Cordova Front during the Spanish Civil War. By the end of his brief life span, he had already published a tremendous body of work.[4]

I got a lot out of my friendship with Fox. Profiting greatly from his wide-ranging knowledge, I often consulted him on theoretical and political questions which arose during my stay at the school.

Springy and I were frequent visitors at the apartment of Fox and his wife Midge. It was there that I first met Karl Radek. A Polish expatriate, he had been an active leader in the Polish Social Democratic Party and a member of the Zimmerwald Left (those internationalists who broke off from the Second International in 1915 and were instrumental in founding the Third International). In 1915-16, Radek—along with Rosa Luxemburg—publicly disagreed with Lenin on the question of self-determination of subject nations.[5] Radek later changed his position and fully united with the Bolshevik point of view in 1917.

Radek was part of the group that returned with Lenin to Russia via Germany in the famous "sealed coach."[6] He was a member of the Bolshevik Central Committee and Politburo. At the time that I met him in 1928, Radek was still under a shadow politically. He had been a leading member of the Trotsky-Zinoviev opposition and was expelled from the CPSU along with the other leaders of the bloc at the Sixteenth Congress of the CPSU in December 1927. Exiled to the Urals, he publicly repudiated his earlier position and was readmitted to the Party a few months later in 1928. He was assigned as editor of *Izvestia* and later became the chief foreign affairs commentator in the leading Soviet papers. He was also a member of the Soviet delegation to the Comintern.

Radek, as I remember him, was a little man, appearing to be somewhat of a dandy in his English tweed jacket, plus-fours and cane. But to me, the most striking thing about him was his beard. It stretched from ear to ear, under his chin and cheeks, giving him a simian look.

His English, though accented, was fluent. When we first met, he immediately engaged me in a conversation about conditions of Blacks in the United States, which branched off into questions of Black literature, writers and the Harlem Renaissance. To my amazement, it was clear that he knew more about the latter subject than I did. I was embarrassed when he asked my opinion about certain Black writers with whom he was familiar but whom I had never even read. I found out later that Claude McKay had been a sort of a protégé of Radek's during the poet's stay in the Soviet Union.

In 1937, along with several others in the Trotskyite "Left Opposition," Radek was convicted of treason, of acting as an "agency" of German and Italian fascism and giving assistance to those who might invade the Soviet Union. He was sent to prison where he died in the forties.[7]

Springy introduced me to many other young Britons in Moscow: such men as William Rust, who later became editor of the *British Worker*; Walter Tapsell, editor of the *Young Worker;* and George Brown. Both Brown and Tapsell were in my brigade in the Spanish Civil War and were killed in battle. Brown was killed at Brunete while I was there.

Our English-speaking section at the Lenin School included five young Irishmen, all members of the Irish Workers League, a communist-oriented group organized by Big Jim Larkin in 1923. It seems that the Irish Communist Party, founded in 1921 by Young Roderick Connolly (son of James Connolly), had collapsed.[8] I was told that its failure was due to a lack of Marxist-Leninist theory and the inability of its members to relate their views on socialism to the specific conditions in Ireland. But there was certainly no lack of revolutionary enthusiasm and motivation among the young people I met at the Lenin School, some of whom had been members of the Irish Communist Party. The group had been sent to the Lenin School as a step towards rebuilding the Irish Party.

All five were protégés of the famous Irish revolutionary, Big Jim Larkin—most definitely a man of action and organization, not of theory. A tall, bulky man with a huge, hawk-like nose and bushy eyebrows, Larkin was one of the most colorful figures of the Irish labor movement. From his base among Dublin dockworkers, his activities as a labor leader had ranged over three continents—from the British Isles, to Argentina, to the U.S.—and at the time that I met him, spanned more than three decades. He had been a founding member of the U.S. Party and was a member of both the Executive Committees of the Communist International and the Red International of Labor Unions (RILU or the Profintern). He was often in Moscow, where I saw him frequently.

The Irish students came from the background of the 1916 Easter Rebellion and the revolutionary movement reflected in the lives of men like Larkin and James Connolly. Among them were Sean Murray and James Larkin, Jr. (Big Jim's son).[9] All of them had been active in the post-war independence and labor struggles. I was closest to Murray, the oldest of the group, who was a roommate of mine.

This was my first encounter with Irish revolutionaries and their experiences excited me. As members of oppressed nations, we had a lot in common. I was impressed by their idealism and revolutionary ardor and their implacable hatred of Britain's imperialist rulers, as well as for their own traitors. But what impressed me most about them was their sense of national pride—not of the chauvinistic variety, but that of revolutionaries aware of the international importance of their independence struggle and the role of Irish workers.

Then too, they were a much older nation. Their fight against Britain had at that time been going on for 750 years. They were fond of quoting the observations of Marx and Engels on the Irish movement, such as Marx's letter to Engels in which he said: "English reaction in England had its roots in the subjugation of Ireland."[10] Another favorite was: "No nation can be free if it oppresses other nations."[11]

But most of all, they liked to point out Lenin's defense of the Easter Uprising in his reply to Karl Radek, who had called the rebellion a putsch and discounted the significance of the struggle of small nations in the epoch of imperialism. Lenin admonished Radek, stating that "a struggle capable of going to the lengths of insurrection and street fighting, of breaking down the iron discipline of the army and martial law," on the doorstep of the imperialist metropolis itself, would be a blow against imperialism more significant than that in a remote colony.[12]

I was shortly to find these observations applicable to the liberation movement of U.S. Blacks. As a result of my association with the Irish, I became deeply interested in the Irish question, seeing in it a number of parallels to U.S. Blacks. In retrospect, I am certain that this interest heightened my receptivity to the idea of a Black nation in the United States.

TEACHERS AND CLASSES

The teaching method at the school was a combination of lectures and discussions. About once a week the instructor would give a lecture to the entire English-speaking group, all twenty-five or thirty of us. Readings would be assigned, and when material was not available in English, it would be translated especially for us. I had one advantage in this regard because by this time I could read Russian fluently. Following the lecture, the instructor would delineate a number of sub-topics. Several days later, we would all get together again and one person from each group would report on its work. The instructors were often available for consultation during the time the groups were discussing and researching their topics.

There were no grades given, nor were there any examinations. At the end of the term we would have evaluation sessions, where everyone met and discussed each other's work, including that of the teachers. It was a process of comradely criticism and self-criticism.

I found the classes exciting and challenging and the students on the whole sharp and on a high political level. I was under pressure to keep up. The English in general seemed to be a notch above most of us in political economy. This, I believe, was due to the existence of a large number of Labour Party schools which were spread throughout Britain.

Our instructor for Marxist political economy was Alexandrov, an economist for the Gosplan, the state planning agency. In our class, he was often challenged on some aspect of Marxian economics. He would often have sharp exchanges with one of the British students, I believe it was Black, over differences in interpretations of Marxian economics.

Black was a perfect foil for Alexandrov, who seemed to enjoy these tilts and invited the whole class to participate. Summing up the discussion, Alexandrov would brand Black's position as "undialectical, mechanistic, and rooted in vulgar economism and Fabianism." Black was stubborn, however, and prodded by Alexandrov, kept up his critical attitude for the whole first term. It was only during the evaluations at the end of the term that Black conceded that some of his positions had been in error.

Perhaps the most prominent among my teachers was Ladislaus Rudas, a noted Hungarian Marxist philosopher and scholar. Like many Hungarian intellectuals, he spoke several languages fluently. He had been a leader of the short-lived Hungarian Soviet and had come to Moscow along with Béla Kun and the other Hungarian refugees. He taught historical and dialectical materialism and his class was one of the most interesting. It presented history, my favorite subject, but with a different content: a Marxist-Leninist interpretation, portraying not just the role of individuals but of classes.

We had lengthy discussions on the French Revolution; the petty bourgeois dictatorship under Robespierre and the Jacobins; Saint Just and the extreme left, the Thermidor and Napoleon—"the man on the white horse." The English Revolution and Cromwell, the Levellers, the Long Parliament. The Dutch revolution and Prince Egmont. We had extended discussions on the American revolutions—the War of Independence, the Civil War and Reconstruction.

These discussions brought out our lack of knowledge of our own U.S. history; there was a complete absence of materials which presented U.S. history from a Marxist standpoint. All I can remember is the so-called Marxist analysis in the works of James Oneal (*The Workers in American History)* and A.M. Simons's *Social Forces in American History.*

The former I never read, but the work by Simons stands out in my memory for its gratuitous slur on U.S. Blacks. Simons claimed that the Black man did not revolt against slavery during the Civil War: "His inaction in time of crisis, his failure to play any part in the struggle that broke his shackles, told the world that he was not of those who to free themselves would strike a blow."[13]

I had read about the slave revolts of Gabriel, Nat Turner, and John Brown's heroic raid on Harper's Ferry with his band of whites, free Blacks and escaped slaves. I knew of the role of Black soldiers in the Civil War who had to overcome the opposition of the Union Army in order to fight. Simons's book skipped over all of this.

I had come across Charles and Mary Beard's *The Rise of American Civilization.* The Beards were economic determinists who had characterized the Civil War as the Second American Revolution. The idea seemed novel at the time, all of which points up how widespread had been the distortion of the period by U.S. bourgeois historians.

My sub-group, which included Springy and the Irishman Sean Murray, had chosen the Civil War and the Reconstruction period as our subject, with myself as the reporter. Our group had long discussions, after which we consulted Rudas, who by that time had evidently done some homework of his own on the matter. He called our attention to the writings of Marx and Engels, their correspondence on the Civil War, and Marx's series of articles in the *New York Herald Tribune.*[14] After the discussions, I submitted a paper to the class, which evoked considerable discussion. On the whole it was well-received by my fellow classmates and commended by Rudas.

Perhaps our most interesting and stimulating course was on Leninism and the history of the CPSU, taught by the historian I. Mintz. A former Red Army officer, he was at the time assigned to work on a history of the CPSU. Mintz was a young Ukrainian Jew, a soft-spoken and mild-mannered little man. He had a way of illustrating his subject through his own personal experiences during the Revolution and the Civil War in the Ukraine. His appearance contrasted sharply with his role and bloody experiences in the battle for the Ukraine. His was a thrilling story, involving a meteoric rise from leader of partisans to commander of a Red Army brigade. They had fought against a whole array of anti-Soviet and interventionist forces: the White Guardist Denikin; the Cossack Hepmans, Kornilov and Kaledin; Makhno's anarchists (who were sometimes with and sometimes against the Red Army); General Petlura and sundry gangs of marauders and pogromists; and the remnants of the German garrisons in the Ukraine.

In connection with our studies of the Bolshevik agrarian policy during the Civil War, Mintz told us of his involvement in the settling of the question of land redistribution in a Ukrainian district. This district had been reconquered by his Red Army unit from Denikin in the early winter of 1920. He gave us a general rundown of the agrarian situation at the time, the class forces in the countryside, their shifting alignment during the course of the Revolution, and the evolution of Bolshevik agrarian policy.

Kerensky's provisional government had done nothing to solve the agrarian problem, to relieve the land hunger of the masses of peasantry. Though Kerensky's program had promised confiscation of the big estates, once in power, the government reneged on even that level of reform.

The Bolsheviks exhorted the peasants to await the decision of the Constituent Assembly. Thus, at the time of the outbreak of the Revolution, the vast majority of the cultivatable land was still concentrated in the estates of the big landlords. The peasantry, constituting four-fifths of the population of the old Czarist Empire, was composed of three different strata. The well-to-do peasant not only owned enough land to support himself in good fashion, but also often hired labor to work his land. This group comprised only about four to five percent of the total. The poor peasant was without sufficient land to support himself and his family and often hired himself out as a laborer to the landlord or to a well-to-do peasant. The landless peasant subsisted entirely from the sale of his labor to the landlord or well-to-do peasant.

Under the slogan "Land, Bread and Peace," the Bolsheviks combined the seizure of power in the cities with the land revolution underway in the countryside. Allied with the Social Revolutionaries (SRs), the traditional party of the peasantry, the land was taken over in two phases. The first phase, nationalization and confiscation, was incorporated in the Land Decree of the All Russian Congress of Soviets, November 8, 1917. This stamped the seal of governmental endorsement on the land seizures and called for their extension.

In September 1917, Lenin declared Bolshevik support for the land program of the SRs, while pointing out that only a proletarian revolution could put even this program into practice.[15] The SR program called for equal distribution of land among the peasants while the Bolsheviks favored collective, and eventually state-owned farms. But since the SR program represented the understanding of the majority of peasants, Lenin's policy was to resolve this difference by "teaching the masses, and in turn *learning from the masses,* the practical expedient measures for bringing about such a transition."[16]

The day after seizing power, the Bolsheviks put this policy into practice with their November 8, 1917, Decree on Land which made the SR program into law.[17] Within three weeks, the SRs' left wing—representing the poorer peasants—had split from the rest of the party and entered a coalition government with the Bolsheviks. In the following years, Lenin held to the basic position he stated when presenting the November 8 decree:

> As a democratic government, we cannot ignore the decision of the masses of the people, even though we may disagree with it. In the fire of experience, applying the decree in practice, and carrying it out locally, the peasants will themselves realize where the truth lies...We must be guided by experience; we must allow complete freedom to the creative faculties of the masses.[18]

It was against this background that Mintz related some of his experiences in the Ukraine. He told us that the Party in the Ukraine had not fully grasped the lessons of the agrarian revolution in Great Russia. He spoke of one occasion when his outfit had attempted to arbitrarily carry out the collectivization of all the big estates in territory occupied by their division of the Red Army; their efforts met with the stiff resistance of the local peasants, even though the peasants supported Soviet power.

The peasants insisted on the redistribution of all the estates, breaking them up among the individual peasant families, rather than taking over the large estates collectively. This occurred during the fall months of 1919, on the eve of Denikin's final defeat, when Soviet power in the form of an "independent Ukrainian Republic" was about to be established.

It was a time when Lenin, in order to allay anti-Russian distrust and suspicion among the Ukrainian peasantry, had insisted that certain concessions be made. Both Russian and Ukrainian were to be used on an equal footing, and attempts to push back the Ukrainian language to a secondary status were to be denounced. Lenin demanded that all officials in the new republic be able to speak Ukrainian and called for the distribution of large farms among the peasants. State farms were to be created "in strictly limited numbers and of limited size and in each case in conformity with the instruments of the surrounding peasantry."[19]

Despite this, Mintz said, many of us Ukrainian Bolsheviks tended to downplay the nationality element in our own country. "In my own case, I had long since ceased to consider myself a Jew." Most of them were what was called at that time "abstract internationalists"; super-internationalists who, in the name of internationalism, renounced the national element in the struggle of the Ukrainian masses.

"But we were not alone in this deviation," Mintz told us. "Although Lenin's policy was eventually adopted by the Central Executive Committee, it was sharply opposed by leading Ukrainian Bolsheviks such as Rakovsky and Manuilsky. What it finally came down to, in the case of our army division, was that as a result of the opposition of the peasants in the area, we were forced to give up our plan for collectivization; we thus had to settle for having only one of the estates being set aside as a Soviet farm."

The first part of each summer at the Lenin School was spent in practical work that related to our studies. In the course of my practical work program in the early summer of 1928, I had my first close-up observation of the peasant question in the USSR. I visited a peasant village in an agricultural district to talk with the people and make observations. Though hardly more than 100 *versts* (about 66 miles) from Moscow, it was truly in "darkest Russia," a provincial place, isolated from the city. Few inhabitants had been as far away as Moscow.

After taking a train to the nearest station, I then had to take a *droshky* another twenty *versts* to the county seat. Arriving in the morning, I was let down in the middle of the village square. I looked around to get my bearings, and in no time at all, a crowd had gathered to stare at me.

The crowd grew larger by the minute; it seemed as if the whole village had turned out in the square. I could overhear remarks: "Who is he?"

"Why is he so Black?"

"What nice teeth!"

"Look, his palms are white!"

"He seems *sympatichno,*" remarked some.

Someone else who perhaps had done a little reading said, "Oh, he's probably from Africa. There the sun is so hot that people who have lived there for thousands of years become black." The crowd seemed to accept this explanation.

I stuck out my hand to a young man standing nearby. *"Zdravstvuyte,"* I said. "Could you direct me to the town committee?" He seemed to be surprised that I could speak Russian, but getting himself together, he directed me to a building across the square.

"Who are you? Where did you come from?" the young man asked.

"I'm an American Negro from the United States," I replied.

Someone in the crowd remarked, "I told you he was of the Negro tribe."

Someone else spoke up, "I thought all people in the United States were white."

That gave me the chance to get off on my international propaganda spiel, and I jumped right in. "Oh no," I replied. "There are twelve million Blacks in the U.S.—about one-tenth of the population." I went on to tell them about Blacks in the South, and the modern-day remnants of the plantation system: sharecropping, Jim Crow and lynch terror.

Someone remarked, "Oh. Like it was with us under the old regime." Many of the villagers nodded their heads in agreement with this.

Just then I noticed an old woman with a cane, slowly making her way through the crowd toward where I was. The young people gave way before her, in deference to her age. When she reached the center, I watched the changes in expression on her old wrinkled face as she gazed at me. First it registered amazement at such a sight; then comprehension when she had "cased" the whole situation.

Then she spit on the ground and slammed her cane down. *"Idite domoi!* Go home!" she told me. "Wash your face! You should be ashamed of yourself, trying to fool the people around here!" Waving her cane at me, she then turned scornfully away. In all her ninety-odd years, she had never before seen a Black man!

TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BOLSHEVIK REVOLUTION

The first time I met Stalin was at a social gathering, a party in the Kremlin during the World Congress of the Friends of the Soviet Union. The congress coincided with the Tenth Anniversary celebrations in the fall of 1927. The congress sessions were held at the *Dom Soyusov* (House of the Trade Unions). It was the greatest international gathering I had ever witnessed. There were probably more than one thousand delegates, representing countries from six continents. The most impressive delegation was the huge one (about one hundred people) from China which was headed by Soong Ch'ing-ling, the young and beautiful widow of Sun Yat-sen. (Today she is vice-chairman of the National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China.)

I was surprised and delighted to meet my old friend Chi (Dum Ping), a former Chinese student at the University of Chicago with whom I had worked in the organization of the ill-fated Interracial Youth Forum on the Southside in 1924. He had since gone back to China and was now one of the translators for the Chinese delegation. It was Chi who introduced me to Madame Sun Yat-sen. She spoke English with an American accent, which was not surprising since she had been educated in the United States.

Among the other notables we were to meet were the young Cuban revolutionary, Antonio Mella, later murdered in Mexico City by Machado's assassins. He was a tall, wiry youth, who always had a guitar slung over his back. There was Henri Barbusse, a pale, wan man, a victim of tuberculosis. He was a great literary figure in France and wrote a biography of Stalin. There was the American novelist Theodore Dreiser, father of American realism, who was there with his secretary, Ruth Epperson Kennell, a young American woman.

A special friend of us Black students was Josiah Gumede, the elderly president of the African National Congress and a descendant of Zulu chiefs.[20] We took him in charge. Every morning we would call for him at his room at the National Hotel on Tverskaya (now Gorky Street) and escort him to the congress sessions. We also accompanied him on the rounds of parties held by the various delegations. He must have been about sixty at the time, but was big, strong and healthy and never seemed to tire.

The gala occasion for the whole congress was the Evening of National Culture. It consisted of an elaborate pageant of folk dances from the various Soviet republics and autonomous regions. The dancers were all in their traditional costumes, a striking array of color and diversity. On this occasion, our Soviet hosts went all out for their foreign guests.

The hall in the *Dom Soyusov* had been converted into a huge banquet room. We were seated before tables loaded with various kinds of liquor, including of course, the best vodka and zakuskas; appetizers of all kinds—cheeses, herrings, caviar, cold sturgeon and cold meats. Then came dinner, from soup to dessert.

The banquet finally ended. Most of us were in somewhat of a stupor from food and drink. Our group, which included our teacher Sik, was leaving the hall amidst the din of a thousand people talking and laughing. On our way out we stopped and chatted with numerous delegates.

Gumede was the chief attraction; he had given a stirring speech at a session of the congress a few days before. As I recall, we were nearing the door when we were stopped and greeted by the old Cossack cavalryman, Marshall Budenny. He was a short, powerful, bow-legged man, with a large ferocious black mustache. He was also in a merry mood.

"Tell the chief," he said, grasping Gumede's hand, "that we stand ready to come to his support anytime he needs us!"

"Thank you, thank you," beamed Gumede.

At that moment, someone approached us, I believe it was Tival, Stalin's secretary, and informed us that we were invited to a party in the Kremlin.

We walked the short distance across the square to the Kremlin. Once within the Kremlin walls, we were guided into one of the old palaces and then taken upstairs to a small hall. It was a long room with an arched ceiling reaching almost to the floors on the sides. It looked to me as though it could have been a throne room of one of the old czars.

There were perhaps fifty people in the room. In the center there was a large table loaded with the traditional zakuskas, fruits and drinks. It was sort of a buffet; chairs were not directly at the table but rather were along the walls on each side.

There in the center on one side was Stalin, with a number of people seated beside him. He rose, shook our hands, and after we were introduced, welcomed us, “Be our guests.” He was a short, thick-set man, as I remember, dressed in a neat tan suit with a military collar and boots shined to glisten.

He motioned us to the vacant chairs on the other side of the room. On that side were a number of folk dancers and musicians, presumably participants in the earlier festivities. Somebody introduced Gumede as an African Zulu chief from the congress, and the dancers probably thought we were all from the same tribe. Gumede, however, was the center of attention, surrounded by the dancers, who insisted on being photographed with him.

They gathered around him—a couple sitting on his lap and others behind him with their arms around him. Stalin, observing all this from the other side of the room, seemed amused. Later on, Stalin got up, bid us all good-night and walked out. As I remember, it was quite a relaxed evening with no political discussion. We left shortly after Stalin departed and were driven home by a chauffeur from the Kremlin car pool.

Another version of this occasion was given, I believe by Sik, who insisted that Otto had danced with Stalin that evening. I don’t doubt Sik’s word, but I certainly don’t remember seeing it. Otto didn’t remember the incident either. But I do know that in Russia it was not uncommon for one man to dance with another on festive occasions. As I recall, the hall became more crowded, and I was attracted by a group of folk dancers who offered to help us students with our Russian.

Afterwards Sik kept reminding Otto, “Don’t you remember, Otto, you asked Stalin to dance, and you danced around the hall with him several times. That was a memorable occasion; how could you forget it?”

As for Gumede, he returned home a firm supporter of the Soviet

Union. Everywhere he went, he gave glowing reports of his visit there. In January 1928, he told an ANC rally that "I have seen the new world to come, where it has already begun. I have been to the new Jerusalem."[21]

One day in December, Otto called me and said he had just gotten a call to pick up a young Black woman, Maude White, who was to be a student at KUTVA. She was waiting at the station. He asked me if I'd like to go along and I readily agreed, looking forward with pleasure to meeting this woman—the first Black woman since Jane Golden to study in the Soviet Union.

We rented a *droshky* and proceeded to the station. It was a cold winter night, the temperature was somewhere around thirty-five below zero. When we got there, we saw the young Black woman. She was about nineteen, standing in the unheated station. She was a strikingly pretty, brown-skinned woman with huge dark eyes.

She had on a seal skin coat, silk stockings and pumps, and by the time we got there she was practically hysterical with the cold. "Get me out of here. Get me out of here," she shouted. Otto and I looked at each other, both thinking the same thing—we're going to have a rough time with this one.

We couldn't have been more wrong. Maude got right into the swing of things at school. She was a very popular student and stayed in Moscow for three years. We later learned that she had been a school teacher before coming to Moscow. On returning to the States, she became an outstanding Party cadre and a life-long friend of mine.

Chapter 8

Self-Determination: The Fight for a Correct Line

Towards the end of 1927, Nasanov returned to the Soviet Union after a sojourn in the United States as the representative of the Young Communist International. I had known him briefly in the States before my departure for Russia. Nasanov was one of a group of YCI workers who had been sent on missions to several countries. He had considerable experience with respect to the national and colonial question and was considered an expert on these matters.

Nasanov's observations had convinced him that U.S. Blacks were essentially an oppressed nation whose struggle for equality would ultimately take an autonomous direction and that the content of the Black liberation movement was the completion of the agrarian and democratic revolution in the South—a struggle which was left unresolved by the Civil War and betrayal of Reconstruction. Therefore, it was the duty of the Party to channel the movement in a revolutionary direction by raising and supporting the slogan of the right of self-determination for Afro-Americans in the Black Belt, the area of their greatest concentration.

Upon his return, Nasanov sought me out and it was he, I believe, who first informed me that I had been elected to the National Committee of the YCL back in the States. In the months ahead, we were to become close friends. Through him, I met a number of YCI people, mostly Soviet comrades who held the same position as

Nasanov did on the national question. They seemed to be pushing to have the matter reviewed at the forthcoming Sixth Congress of the Comintern. And as it later became clear to me, they were anxious to recruit at least one Black to support their position.

As I have indicated before, the position was not entirely new to me. I was present at the meeting of the YCL District Committee in Chicago in 1924 when Bob Mazut (then YCI rep to the U.S.), at the behest of Zinoviev, had raised the question of self-determination At that time, he had been shouted down by the white comrades. (See Chapter Four.)

Sen Katayama had told us Black KUTVA students that Lenin had regarded U.S. Blacks as an oppressed nation and referred us to his draft resolution on the national and colonial question which was adopted by the Second Congress of the Comintern in 1920.[1] Otto and other Black students had also told me that they got a similar impression from their meeting with Stalin at the Kremlin shortly after their arrival in the Soviet Union.

All of this seemed tentative to me. No one had elaborated the position fully and Nasanov was the first person I met who attempted to argue it definitively. But all of these arguments, and especially Nasanov's prodding, set me to thinking and confronted me with the need to apply concretely my newly-acquired Marxist-Leninist knowledge on the national-colonial question to the condition of Blacks in the United States.

To me, the idea of a Black nation within U.S. boundaries seemed far-fetched and not consonant with American reality. I saw the solution through the incorporation of Blacks into U.S. society on the basis of complete equality, and only socialism could bring this to pass. There was no doubt in my mind that the path to freedom for us Blacks led directly to socialism, uncluttered by any interim stage of self-determination or Black political power. The unity of Black and white workers against the common enemy, U.S. capitalism, was the motor leading toward the dual goal of Black freedom and socialism.

I felt that it was difficult enough to build this unity, without adding to it the gratuitous assumption of a non-existent Black nation, with its implication of a separate state on U.S. soil. To do so, I felt, was to create new and unnecessary roadblocks to the already difficult path to Black and white unity.

Socialism, I reasoned, was not in contradiction to the movement for Black cultural identity, expressed in the cultural renaissance of the twenties and in Garvey's emphasis on race pride and history (which I regarded as one of the positive aspects of that movement). Socialism for U.S. Blacks did not imply loss of cultural identity any more than it did for the Jews of the Soviet Union, among whom I had witnessed the proliferation of the positive features of Jewish culture—theater, literature and language.

The Jews were not considered a nation because they were not concentrated in any definite territory; they were regarded as a national minority and Birobidzhan was set aside as a Jewish autonomous province. Such a bolstering of self-respect, dignity and self-assertion on the part of a formerly oppressed minority people was a necessary stage in the development of a universal culture which would amalgamate the best features of all national groups. This was definitely the policy of the Soviet Union with regard to formerly oppressed nationalities and ethnic groups.

Like the Jews, I reasoned, the position of U.S. Blacks was that of an oppressed race, though at the time I am sure I would have been hard-pressed to define precisely what was meant by that phrase. The main factor in the oppression of Jews under the Czar had been the religious factor; the main factor with U.S. Blacks was race. Blacks lacked some of the essential attributes of a nation which had been defined by Stalin in his classic work, *Marxism and the National Question.*[2]

Most assuredly, one could argue that among Blacks there existed elements of a special culture and also a common language (English). But this did not add up to a nation, I reasoned. Missing was the all-important aspect of a national territory. Even if one agreed that the Black Belt, where Blacks were largely concentrated, rightfully belonged to them, they were in no geographic position to assert their right of self-determination.

I could see many analogies between the national problem in the old Czarist Empire and the problem of U.S. Blacks, but the analogy floundered on this question of territory. For the subject nations of the old Czarist Empire were situated either on the border of the oppressing Great Russian nation or were completely outside it. But American Blacks were set down in the very midst of the oppressing white nation, the strongest capitalist power on earth. Faced with this, it was no wonder that most nationalist movements up until then had taken the road of a separate state outside the United States. How then could one convince U.S. Blacks that the right of self-determination was a realistic program?

Nasanov and his young friends answered my arguments over the course of a series of discussions and were quick to pick out the flaws in my position. They contended that I was guilty of an ahistoric approach with respect to the elements of nationhood. Certainly, some of the attributes of a nation were weakly developed in the case of U.S. Blacks. But that was the case with most oppressed peoples precisely because the imperialist policy of national oppression is directed towards artificially and forcibly retaining the economic and cultural backwardness of the colonial peoples as a condition for their super-exploitation. My mistake had been to ignore Lenin's dictum that in the epoch of imperialism it was essential to differentiate between the oppressor and the oppressed nations.

They further contended that I had presented the matter as though self-determination were solely a question for Blacks. I had therefore separated the Black rebellion from the struggle for socialism in the United States. In fact, it was a constituent part of the latter struggle or, more precisely, a special phase of the struggle of the American working class for socialism.

My argument added up to a defense of the current position of the U.S. Party, albeit I had embellished the position somewhat against Nasanov's criticisms. Up to this point, the Black students had not challenged the Party's line on Afro-American work. We reasoned that the Party's default in the work among Blacks was not the result of an incorrect line, but came from a failure to carry out in practice its declared line. We believed that this failure was due to an underestimation of the importance of work among Blacks, which came from an underestimation of the revolutionary potential of the struggle of the Black masses for equality. All this resulted from the persistence of remnants of white racist ideology within the ranks of the Party, including some of its leadership.

Nasanov and some of his friends agreed with us that the American CP did underestimate the revolutionary potential of the Black struggle for equality. But, they maintained, this underestimation came from a fundamentally incorrect social-democratic line, rather than from white chauvinism. They said that I had stood the whole matter on its head: I had presented the incorrect policies as the result of subjective white chauvinist attitudes; whereas, they pointed out that the white chauvinist attitudes persisted precisely because the Party's line was fundamentally incorrect in that it denied the national character of the question.

"Our American comrades seem to think that only the direct struggle for socialism is revolutionary," they told me, "and that the national movement detracts from that struggle and is therefore reactionary." This, they pointed out, was an American version of the "pure proletarian revolution" concept; they referred me to Lenin's polemic against Radek on the question of self-determination.

The Bolsheviks also criticized my formulation of the matter as primarily a race question. To call the matter a race question, they said, was to fall into the bourgeois liberal trap of regarding the fight for equality as primarily a fight against racial prejudices of whites. This slurred over the economic and social roots of the question and obscured the question of the agrarian democratic revolution in the South, which was pivotal to the struggle for Black equality throughout the country. They pointed out that it was wrong to counterpose the struggle for equality to the struggle for self-determination. For in fact, in the South, self-determination for Blacks (political power in their own hands) was the guarantee of equality.

HISTORY OF THE QUESTION IN THE COMINTERN

In these discussions with my young friends, which extended over the course of several months, I became keenly aware of the gaps in my understanding of Marxist-Leninist theory on the national-colonial question. I was to find, as Nasanov and others had indicated, that the idea of Blacks as an oppressed nation was not new in the Comintern. Though Stalin was undoubtedly the person pushing the position at the time, it had not originated with him, but with Lenin himself.

It first appeared in Lenin's "Draft Theses on the National-Colonial Question" which he submitted to the Second Congress of the Comintern in 1920. The draft, which was later adopted, called upon the communist parties to "render direct aid to the revolutionary movements among the dependent and underprivileged nations (for example, Ireland, the American Negroes, etc.) and in the colonies."[3]

Some have argued that Lenin's reference to U.S. Blacks as a subject nation was merely a tentative deduction. When he submitted his draft, he asked the delegates for opinions and suggestions on fifteen points, one of which was "Negroes in America."[4]

It was recorded, however, that the Colonial Commission of the congress, which Lenin himself headed and in which Sen Katayama was a leading member, held lengthy discussions on the question of U.S. Blacks.[5]

John Reed, the American author, was a delegate and participated in the discussion, apparently in opposition to Lenin's formulations. In fact, he made two speeches, one in the commission and one to the congress, contending that the problem of U.S. Blacks was that of "both a strong race movement and a strong proletarian workers' movement which is rapidly developing in class consciousness."[6] Equating all national movements among Blacks to Garvey's Back to Africa separatism, he contended that "a movement which struggles for a separate national existence has no success among the Negroes, like the 'Back to Africa' movement, for example....." and that Blacks "consider themselves above all Americans, they feel at home in the United States. This makes the tasks of communists very much easier."[7]

But despite Reed's objections, the reference to American Blacks as an oppressed nation remained in the resolution as finally adopted. For Lenin's thesis was not something spun out of thin air, but was the result of a serious study of the question. This is clear from his work "New Data on the Laws Governing the Development of Capitalism in Agriculture," which spoke about the United States.

In this work, published in 1915 (and based on the U.S. Census of 1910), Lenin viewed the question of Blacks in the South as one of an uncompleted agrarian and bourgeois democratic revolution. He drew attention to the remarkable similarity between the economic positions of the South's Black tenants and the emancipated serfs in the agrarian centers of Russia, pointing out that both groups were not tenants in the European civilized sense, but "....semi-slaves, share-croppers..."[8]

Emphasizing the absence of elementary democratic rights among Blacks, he alluded to the South as "the most stagnant area, where the masses are subjected to the greatest degradation and oppression...a kind of prison where (these 'emancipated' Negroes) are hemmed in, isolated, and deprived of fresh air."[9] These kinds of conditions, the lot of the vast majority of U.S. Blacks, undoubtedly led Lenin to conclude that their movement for "emancipation" would take a national revolutionary direction.

Conclusive proof of Lenin's thinking at the time with respect to U.S. Blacks can be found in an uncompleted work written in 1917, though not available until 1935. The work, "Statistics and Sociology," was begun in the early part of 1917, but was interrupted by the February Revolution and never resumed.[10]

In the section of the manuscript referring to U.S. Blacks, he drew a clear distinction between their positions and that of the foreign-born immigrants, that is between the white foreign-born assimilables and the Black unassimilables.

> In the United States, the Negroes (and also the Mulattos and Indians) account for only 11.1 per cent. They should be classed as an oppressed nation, for the equality won in the Civil War of 1861-1865 and guaranteed by the Constitution of the republic was in many respects increasingly curtailed in the chief Negro areas (the South) in connection with the transition from the progressive, pre-monopoly capitalism of 1860-

> 1870 to the reactionary, monopoly capitalism (imperialism) of the new era."[11]

Whereas with the white foreign-born immigrants, Lenin observed that the speed of development of capitalism in America has "produced a situation in which vast national differences are speedily and fundamentally, as nowhere else in the world, smoothed out to form a single 'American nation.' "[12]

All of this shows that the idea that U.S. Blacks comprise an oppressed nation was neither a temporary nor tentative formulation on Lenin's part.

Despite the thesis of the Second Congress, Reed's views—reflecting as they did the position of the young American Party—were to persist in the U.S. without serious challenge through the Fifth Congress of the Comintern. The Third Congress of 1921 recorded no discussion with respect to the character of the problem.

The Fourth Congress in 1922 also did not seriously discuss the point. This meeting, however, marked the first appearance of Black delegates to the Comintern. They were Otto Huiswood as regular Party delegate, and the poet Claude McKay as a special fraternal delegate. It was also the first congress to set up a Negro Commission, and extended discussions took place on the thesis brought in by the commission which characterized the position of U.S. Blacks as an aspect of the colonial question. It stressed the special role of American Blacks in support of the liberation struggles of Africa, Central and South America and the Caribbean.

The thesis of the Fourth Congress did add a new, international dimension to the question, but it did not challenge the Party's basic anti-self-determination position. This position was stressed in a speech by Huiswood (Billings) which called the Afro-American question "another phase of the racial and colonial question," an essentially economic problem which was "intensified by the friction which exists between the white and black races."[13]

The discussion of the character of the question came up in the Fifth Congress in 1924, this time in connection with the Draft Program of the Communist International. For the first time since the Second Congress, the discussion centered directly on the character of the question as an oppressed nation and the appropriateness of the slogan of the right of self-determination.

August Thalheimer (the German head of the Commission on the Draft Program) reported that "the slogan of the right of self-determination cannot solve all national questions." Such is the case in the United States, "where there is an extraordinarily mixed population" and where the "race question" is also involved. Therefore, he pointed out, "the Program Commission was of the opinion that the slogan of right of self-determination must be supplemented by another slogan: 'Equal Rights for all Nationalities and Races.' "[14]

Representing the U.S. at the Fifth Congress, John Pepper supported this anti-self-determination position. According to him, the United States was a country in which the different nationalities could not be separated. Self-determination was not appropriate; Blacks in the U.S. did not want it. "They do not want to set up a separate state inside the U.S.A.," and they wish to remain inside the U.S., not leave it for Africa. To the demand of "social equality," he held that "we should change these words to the following: full equality in every respect."[15]

Lovett Fort-Whiteman, the sole Black delegate, apparently supported Pepper's position and gave his standard speech (which I was to hear a number of times in the States). He stressed the racial aspect of the problem and called for a special communist approach to Blacks.

There appeared to be no opposition to the draft program, but, after all, it was only the first version. The program in its final form was to be discussed and adopted at the Sixth Congress. Apparently Zinoviev and others in the CI leadership were not satisfied with the formulation that had rejected self-determination for U.S. Blacks. Zinoviev had instructed Bob Mazut to investigate the question while on his assignment to the U.S., immediately following the congress.

Such was the situation following the Fifth Congress. The question can be raised as to why the U.S. Party's position was not seriously challenged during this whole period and why the proponents in the Comintern of the self-determination thesis failed to press for their position.

Their reluctance in this regard, I presume, was because they did not want to push their position against the unanimous opposition of the American Party, including its Black members. After all, the Comintern was a voluntary union of communist parties which operated under democratic-centralism. It was not the policy of the Comintern leadership to arbitrarily force positions on member parties.

1928: A REEXAMINATION OF THE QUESTION

How are we to account then for the renewed interest in the Afro-American question among certain influential leaders of the Comintern on the eve of the Sixth Congress? Why the drive to reopen the question? The answer lies in the changed world situation: the sharpened crisis of the world capitalist system, consequent on the breakdown of partial capitalist stabilization; the beginning of a deepening economic depression in Europe; and the continued upsurge of the colonial revolutions in China, India and Indonesia.

These harbingers of the new period were pointed out by Stalin at the Fifteenth Congress of the CPSU in early December 1927, in which he referred to the "collapsing stabilization" of capitalism.[16]

It was to be a period of revolutionary struggle. In order to lead these struggles, an attack on right opportunism was required in the practice and work of the communist parties. It was a period in which the national and colonial question was to acquire a new urgency. The CI paid special attention to the fight against those views which liquidated or downplayed the importance of the question. In this context, the Comintern felt that the establishment of a revolutionary line on the Afro-American question was key if the CPUSA was to lead the joint struggle of the Black and white working masses in the coming period.

The low status of the CP's Negro work itself was another factor pressing for a radical policy review. There had been no progress in this work, despite the prodding of the Comintern. As already mentioned, the highly touted American Negro Labor Congress had failed to even get off the ground.

In a speech at the Sixth Congress, James Ford counted nineteen communications from the Comintern to the U.S. Party on Negro work, none of which had been put into effect or brought before the Party. He further observed that "we have no more than 50 Negroes in our Party, out of the 12 million Negroes in America."[17]

All of these factors strengthened the determination of the Comintern to make the Sixth Congress the arena for a drastic re-evaluation of work and policy in this area.

In the winter of 1928, preparations were already afoot for the Sixth Congress which was to convene the following summer. The Anglo-American Secretariat of the CI set up a special subcommitteee on the Negro question which would prepare a draft resolution for the official Negro Commission of the Congress.

As I recall, the subcommittee consisted of Nasanov and five students: four Blacks (including my brother Otto and myself) and one white student, Clarence Hathaway, from the Lenin School. In addition, there were some ex-officio members: Profintern rep Bill Dunne and Comintern rep Bob Minor. They seldom attended our sessions. James Ford, who was then assigned to the Profintern, also attended some sessions.

Our subcommittee met and broke the subject down into topics; each of us accepted one as his assignment to research and report on to the committee as a whole. The high point in the discussion was the report of my brother Otto on Garvey's Back to Africa movement. In his report, he concluded that the nationalism expressed in that movement had no objective base in the economic, social and political conditions of U.S. Blacks. It was, he asserted, a foreign importation artificially grafted onto the freedom movement of U.S. Blacks by the West Indian nationalist, Garvey.

U.S. Blacks, Otto concluded, were not an oppressed nation but an oppressed racial minority. The long-range goal of the movement was not the right of self-determination but complete economic, social and political equality to be won through a revolutionary alliance of Blacks and class-conscious white labor in a joint struggle for socialism against the common enemy, U.S. capitalism.

Up to that point, I was still not certain as regarded the applicability of the right of self-determination to the problems of Blacks in the U.S., but my misgivings about the slogan had been shaken somewhat by the series of discussions I had had with my Russian friends. Otto, in his report, had merely restated the CP's current position. But somehow, against the background of our discussion of the Garvey movement, the inadequacy of that position stood out like a sore thumb. Otto, however, had done more than simply restate the position; he brought out into the open what had been implicit in the Party's position all along. That is, that any type of nationalism among Blacks was reactionary.

This view, it occurred to me, was the logical outcome of any position which saw only the "pure proletarian" class struggle as the sole revolutionary struggle against capitalism. The Party had traditionally considered the Afro-American question as that of a persecuted racial minority. They centered their activity almost exclusively on Blacks as workers and treated the question as basically a simple trade union matter, underrating other aspects of the struggle. The struggle for equal rights was seen as a diversion that would obscure or overshadow the struggle for socialism.

But how could one wage a fight against white chauvinism from that position? I thought at the time that viewing everything in light of the trade union question would lead to a denial of the revolutionary potential of the struggle of the whole people for equality. Otto's rejection of nationalism as an indigenous trend brought these points out sharply in my mind.

In the discussion, I pointed out that Otto's position was not merely a rejection of Garveyism but also a denial of nationalism as a legitimate trend in the Black freedom movement. I felt that it amounted to throwing out the baby with the bathwater. With my insight sharpened by previous discussions, I argued further that the nationalism reflected in the Garvey movement was not a foreign transplant, nor did it spring full-blown from the brow of

Jove. On the contrary, it was an indigenous product, arising from the soil of Black super-exploitation and oppression in the United States. It expressed the yearnings of millions of Blacks for a nation of their own.

As I pursued this logic, a totally new thought occurred to me, and for me it was the clincher. The Garvey movement is dead, I reasoned, but not Black nationalism. Nationalism, which Garvey diverted under the slogan of Back to Africa, was an authentic trend, likely to flare up again in periods of crisis and stress. Such a movement might again fall under the leadership of utopian visionaries who would seek to divert it from the struggle against the main enemy, U.S. imperialism, and on to a reactionary separatist path. The only way such a diversion of the struggle could be forestalled was by presenting a revolutionary alternative to Blacks.

To the slogan of "Back to Africa," I argued, we must counterpose the slogan of "right of self-determination here in the Deep South." Our slogan for the U.S. Black rebellion therefore must be the "right of self-determination in the South, with full equality throughout the country," to be won through revolutionary alliance with politically conscious white workers against the common enemy—U.S. imperialism.

Nasanov was seated across the table from me during this discussion and, elated at my presentation, he demonstratively rose to shake my hand. I was the first American communist (with perhaps the exception of Briggs) to support the thesis that U.S. Blacks constituted an oppressed nation.

The next day, Nasanov and I submitted a resolution to the subcommittee incorporating our views. We couldn't get a majority but we had Hathaway's support, as I remember. It was agreed that the resolution be submitted to the Anglo-American Secretariat as the views of those who subscribed to it, and those who disagreed with it would present their own views.

The only really persistent opposition in the subcommittee, as I remember, came from Otto; the other students were somewhat ambivalent on the question. I attributed much of this to Sik's influence, since he had already begun to develop his position which held that the question of U.S. Blacks was a “race” question and that Blacks should not demand self-determination, but simply full social and political equality. His theories were later used by the Lovestoneites and others who opposed the self-determination position.

Once my hesitations were overcome, the whole theory fell logically into place. Here is the full analysis as I came to understand it. The thesis that called for the right of self-determination is supported by a serious economic-historical analysis of U.S. Blacks.

The evolution of American Blacks as an oppressed nation was begun in slavery. In the final analysis, however, it was the result of the unfinished bourgeois democratic revolution of the Civil War and the betrayal of Reconstruction through the Hayes-Tilden (Gentlemen’s) Agreement of 1877.

This betrayal was followed by withdrawal of federal troops and the unleashing of counter-revolutionary terror, including the massacre of thousands of Blacks and the overthrow of the Reconstruction governments which had been based on an alliance of Blacks, poor whites and carpetbaggers. The result was that the Black freedmen, deserted by their former Republican allies, were left without land. Their newly-won rights were destroyed with the abrogation of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments, and they were thrust back upon the plantations of their former masters in a position but little removed from chattel bondage.

The revolution had stopped short of a solution to the crucial land question; there was neither confiscation of the big plantations of the former slaveholding class, nor distribution of the land among the Negro freedmen and poor whites. It was around this issue of land for the freedmen that the revolutionary democratic wave of Radical Reconstruction beat in vain and finally broke.

The advent of imperialism, the epoch of trusts and monopolies at the turn of the century, froze the Blacks in their post-Reconstruction position: landless, semi-slaves in the South. It blocked the road to fusion of Blacks and whites into one nation on the basis of equality and put the final seal on the special oppression of Blacks. The path towards equality and freedom via assimilation was foreclosed by these events, and the struggle for Black equality thenceforth was ultimately bound to take a national revolutionary direction.

Under conditions of imperialist and racist oppression, Blacks in the South were to acquire all the attributes of a subject nation. They are a people set apart by a common ethnic origin, economically interrelated in various classes, united by a common historical experience, reflected in a special culture and psychological makeup. The territory of this subject nation is the Black Belt, an area encompassing the Deep South, which, despite massive outmigrations, still contained (and does to this day) the country's largest concentration of Blacks.

Thus, imperialist oppression created the conditions for the eventual rise of a national liberation movement with its base in the South. The content of this movement would be the completion of the agrarian democratic revolution in the South; that is, the right of self-determination as the guarantee of complete equality throughout the country.

This new analysis defined the status of Blacks in the north as an unassimilable national minority who cannot escape oppression by fleeing the South. The shadow of the plantation falls upon them throughout the country, as the semi-slave relations in the Black Belt continually reproduce Black inequality and servitude in all walks of life.

There are certain singular features of the submerged Afro-American nation which differentiate it from other oppressed nations and which have made the road towards national consciousness and identity difficult and arduous. Afro-Americans are not only "a nation within a nation," but a captive nation, suffering a colonial-type oppression while trapped within the geographic bounds of one of the world's most powerful imperialist countries.

Blacks were forced into the stream of U.S. history in a peculiar manner, as chattel slaves, and are victims of an excruciatingly destructive system of oppression and persecution, due not only to the economic and social survivals of slavery, but also to its ideological heritage, racism.

The Afro-American nation is also unique in that it is a new nation evolved from a people forcibly transplanted from their original African homeland. A people comprised of various tribal and linguistic groups, they are a product not of their native African soil, but of the conditions of their transplantation.

The overwhelming, stifling factor of race, the doctrine of inherent Black inferiority perpetuated by ruling class ideologues, has sunk deep into the thinking of Americans. It has become endemic, permeating the entire structure of U.S. life. Given this, Blacks could only remain permanently unabsorbed in the new world's "melting pot."

The race factor has also left its stigma on the consciousness of the Black nation, creating a powerful mystification about Black Americans which has served to obscure their objective status as an oppressed nation. It has twisted the direction of the Afro-American liberation movement and scarred it while still in its embryonic state.

Although the objective base for equality and freedom via direct integration was foreclosed by the defeat of Reconstruction and the advent of the U.S. as an imperialist power, bourgeois assimilationist illusions were continued into the new era. They were nurtured and kept alive by the nascent Black middle class and the liberal detachment of the white bourgeoisie.

Conditions, however, were maturing for the rise of a mass nationalist movement. This movement was to burst with explosive force upon the political scene in the period following World War I, with the rise of the Garvey movement. The potentially revolutionary movement of Black toilers was diverted into utopian reactionary channels of a peaceful return to Africa.

The period of bourgeois democratic revolutions in the United States ended with the defeat of democratic Reconstruction. The issue of Black freedom was carried over into the epoch of imperialism. Its full solution postponed to the next stage of human progress, socialism. The question has remained and become the most vulnerable area on the domestic front of U.S. capitalism, its "Achilles heel"—a major focus of the contradictions in U.S. society.

Blacks, therefore, in the struggle for national liberation and the entire working class in its struggle for socialism are natural allies. The forging of this alliance is enhanced by the presence of a growing Black industrial working class with direct and historical connections with white labor.

This new line established that the Black freedom struggle is a revolutionary movement in its own right, directed against the very foundations of U.S. imperialism, with its own dynamic pace and momentum, resulting from the unfinished democratic and land revolutions in the South. It places the Black liberation movement and the class struggle of U.S. workers in their proper relationship as two aspects of the fight against the common enemy—U.S. capitalism. It elevates the Black movement to a position of equality in that battle.

The new theory destroys forever the white racist theory traditional among class-conscious white workers which had relegated the struggle of Blacks to a subsidiary position in the revolutionary movement. Race is defined as a device of national oppression, a smokescreen thrown up by the class enemy, to hide the underlying economic and social conditions involved in Black oppression and to maintain the division of the working class.

The new theory was to sensitize the Party to the revolutionary significance of the Black liberation struggle. During the crisis of the thirties, a significant segment of radicalized white workers would come to see the Blacks as revolutionary allies.

The struggle for this position had now begun; there remained its adoption by the Comintern and its final acceptance by the U.S. Party. Our draft resolution, which summed up these points, was turned over to Petrovsky (Bennett), Chairman of the Anglo-American Secretariat. He seemed quite pleased with it, expressed his agreement and suggested some minor changes. He agreed to submit it to the Negro Commission at the forthcoming Sixth Congress.

I continued to work with Nasanov on preparations for the congress. By that time, we had become quite a team. Our next project was the South African question, a question which also fell under the jurisdiction of the Anglo-American Secretariat.

We were assigned to work with James La Guma, a South African Colored comrade who had come to Moscow to attend the Tenth Anniversary celebrations and stayed on to discuss with the ECCI and the Anglo-American Secretariat the problems of the South African Party. Specifically, we were to draft a new resolution on the question, restating and elaborating the Comintern line of an independent Native South African Republic. (The word "Native" was in common usage at the time of the Sixth Congress, though today it is considered derogatory and has been replaced with Black republic or Azania.)

SOUTH AFRICA

This line, formulated the year before with the cooperation of La Guma during his first visit to the Soviet Union in the spring of 1927, had been rejected by the leadership of the South African Party.

La Guma, as I recall, was a young brown-skinned man of Malagasy and French parentage. In South Africa, this placed him in the Colored category, a rung above the Natives on the racial ladder established by the white supremacist rulers. Colored persons were defined as those of mixed blood, including descendants of Javanese slaves, mixed in varying degrees with European whites.

La Guma, however, identified completely with the Natives and their movement. He had been general secretary of the ICU (Industrial and Commercial Union, the federation of Native trade unions) and also secretary of the Capetown branch of the ANC. Later, after his expulsion from the ICU by the red-baiting clique of Clements Kadalie (a Native social democrat), La Guma became secretary of the non-European trade union federation in Capetown.

La Guma was the first South African communist I had ever met. I was delighted and impressed with him and was to find, in the course of our brief collaboration, striking parallels between the struggles of U.S. Blacks for equality and those of the Native South

Africans. In both countries, the white leadership of their respective parties underestimated the revolutionary potential of the Black movement.

La Guma had made his first trip to Moscow the year before. He and Josiah Gumede, president of the ANC, had come as delegates to the inaugural conference of the League Against Imperialism which had convened in Brussels, Belgium, in February 1927. Gumede attended as a delegate from the ANC, while La Guma was a delegate from the South African Communist Party. It was La Guma's first international gathering, and he had the opportunity to meet with leaders from colonial and semi-colonial countries and discuss the South African question with them. Madame Sun Yat-sen and Pandit Nehru were among those present. The conference adopted the resolutions of the South African delegates on the right of self-determination through the complete overthrow of imperialism. The general resolutions of the congress proclaimed: "Africa for the Africans, and their full freedom and equality with other races and the right to govern Africa."[18]

After Brussels, La Guma went on a speaking tour to Germany, after which he came to Moscow. Although the Brussels conference had called for the right of self-determination, it left unanswered many specific questions that are raised by that slogan. Were the Natives in South Africa a nation? What was to be done with the whites?

La Guma was to find the answer to these questions in Moscow, where he consulted with ECCI leaders, including Bukharin, who was then president of the Comintern. He participated with ECCI leaders in the formulation of a resolution on the South African question, calling for the return of the land to the natives and for "an independent native South African republic as a stage towards a workers' and peasants' republic with full, equal rights for all races."[19]

La Guma returned to South Africa with the resolution in June 1927; Gumede also arrived home in the same month. But the resolution was received hostilely by Bunting and was rejected by the South African Party leadership at its annual conference in

December 1927.

Bunting was a British lawyer who had come to South Africa some years before. An early South African socialist and a founder of the Communist Party, he was the son of a British peer. As Bunting later commented, he nearly used up the small fortune he had inherited in the support of Party work and publications.

Bunting and his followers insisted that the South African revolution, unlike those in the colonies, was a direct struggle for socialism without any intermediary stages. To the Comintern slogan of a "Native South African Republic," Bunting counterposed the slogan of a "Workers' and Peasants' Republic." This concept of "pure proletarian revolution" was an echo of what we had found in the U.S. Party with respect to Blacks. But here, the error stood out grotesquely given the reality of the South African situation with its overwhelming Native majority.

It was against this background that La Guma and Gumede left to go to Moscow to attend the Tenth Anniversary celebrations, and the Congress of the Friends of the Soviet Union. La Guma apparently was not in Moscow on that occasion; he was probably out on a tour of the provinces. Both he and Gumede travelled widely during their visit to the Soviet Union.

Our purpose at this time was to develop and clarify the line laid down in the resolution formulated the previous year. Our draft, with few changes, was adopted by the Sixth Congress of the Comintern and the ECCI.

As already noted, Bunting had put forward the slogan of a South African "Workers' and Peasants' Government." Bunting's formulation denied the colonial character of South Africa. He failed, therefore, to see the inherent revolutionary nature of the Natives' struggle for emancipation.

As opposed to this, our resolution began with a definition of South Africa as "a British dominion of the colonial type" whose colonial features included:

1. The country was exploited by British imperialism, with the participation of the South African white bourgeoisie (British and Boer), with British capital occupying the principal economic position.

2. The overwhelming majority of the population were Natives and Colored (five million Natives and Colored, with one and a half million whites, according to the 1921 Census).

3. Natives, who held only one-eighth of the land, were almost completely landless, the great bulk of their land having been expropriated by the white minority.

4. The "great difference in wages and material conditions of the white and black proletariat," and the widespread corruption of the white workers by the racist propaganda and ideology of the imperialists.[20]

These features, we held, determined the character of the South African revolution which, in its first stage, would be a struggle of Natives and non-European peoples for independence and land. As the previous resolution had done, our draft (in the form adopted by the Sixth Congress and the ECCI) held that as a result of these conditions, in order to lead and influence that movement, communists—black and white—must put forth and fight for the general political slogan of "an independent Native South African Republic as a stage towards a workers' and peasants' republic, with full, equal rights for all races, black, coloured and white."

"South Africa is a black country," the resolution went on to say, with a mainly black peasant population, whose land had been expropriated by the white colonizers. Therefore, the agrarian question lies at the foundation of the revolution. The black peasantry, in alliance with and under the leadership of the working class, is the main driving force. Thus, along with the slogan of a "Native Republic," the Party must place the slogan "return of the land to the Natives."

This latter formulation does not appear in the resolution as finally adopted. Instead, it includes the following two formulations:

1. Whites must accept the "correct principle that South Africa belongs to the native population."

2. "The basic question in the agrarian situation in South Africa is the land hunger of the blacks and . . . their interest is of prior importance in the solution of the agrarian question."[21]

With the new resolution completed, La Guma returned to South

Africa. In the year since the first resolution, the opposition to the line had intensified and had already come to a head at the December Party Congress—even before La Guma's return.

Bunting put forward his position in a fourteen page document in the early part of 1928. He equated the nationalism of the Boer minority to the nationalism of the Natives and justified his opposition to nationalism on the basis that all national movements were subject to capitalist corruption, and, in the case of South Africa, a national movement among Natives "would probably only accelerate the fusion, in opposition to it, of the Dutch and British imperialists."[22] Since it would thus only consolidate the forces against it, it was not to be supported.

Bunting not only underrated nationalism, he played on the whites' fear of it and raised the specter of blacks being given free reign, with a resulting campaign to drive the whites into the sea. He was echoing the specter that was haunting whites who remembered the song of the Xhosas:

To chase the white men from the earth
And drive them to the sea.
The sea that cast them up at first
For Ama Xhosa's curse and bane
Howls for the progeny she nursed
To swallow them again.[23]

According to Bunting, the elimination of whites seemed to be implied in the slogan of a "Native Republic." He regarded the phrase "safeguards for minorities " as having little meaning, since whites would assume that the existing injustices would be reversed; that, in effect, blacks would do to them what they had been handing out for so long.

While Bunting had held that all nationalism was reactionary, La Guma distinguished between the revolutionary nationalism of the Natives and the "nationalism" of the Boers (which in reality was simply a quarrel between sections of the ruling class). He argued that the communists must not hold back on the revolutionary demands of the Natives in order to pacify the white workers who are still "saturated with an imperialist ideology" and conscious of the privileges they enjoy at the Natives' expense.[24]

Bunting held that the road to socialism would be traveled under white leadership; to La Guma, the securing of black rights was the first step to be taken. As the Simonses described it, "First establish African majority rule, he argued, and unity, leading to socialism, would follow." La Guma called on communists to "build up a mass party based upon the non-European masses," put forward the slogan of a Native Republic and thus destroy the traditional subservience to whites among Africans.[25] This argument continued up through the Sixth Congress.

MY STAY IN THE CAUCASUS

In the middle of April 1928, I left Moscow for a stay in the Caucasus. The winter had been one of those long, cold, dark Moscow winters. Snow was still on the ground in April. Over the whole season, I had been plagued by recurrent seizures of grippe. Between the demands of school and the preparations for the Sixth Congress, it had been a winter of intense activity. Undoubtedly, this had contributed to my inability to shake off the illness. By the spring, I was pretty run down.

The school doctor detected a slight anemia and recommended a month in a rest home. So, I was shipped off to Kislovodsk, a famous health resort in the northern Caucasus. I traveled south and east, across the Ukrainian steppe, where spring had already come to Rostov-on-Don, the administrative center for the northern Caucasus region. Then on to Mineralny Vody (Mineral Water), the gateway to the Caucasus and a major railroad junction. I changed there for Kislovodsk, a short distance further towards the mountains.

Stepping off the train in Kislovodsk in early morning, I felt better at my first breath of fresh mountain air. The city was located in the foothills on the northern range of the Caucasus. Its mineral springs were famed for their medicinal properties, especially for coronary patients. Formerly a famous watering-place for the wealthy, it was now enjoyed by all the Soviet people. Kislovodsk was the source of the famous Narzan water which cost forty or fifty kopeks a bottle in Moscow. Here it bubbled from the ground in numerous springs, and you could drink all you wanted.

Checking in at the sanitarium, I was assigned to a room shared by three others—two workers and a Party functionary from Tbilisi named Kolya Tsereteli. Kolya was a tall, handsome, swarthy young man. He cut quite a figure in his long Georgian *robochka,* soft leather boots, high astrakhan cap and ornamental belt, complete with *kinjal* (dagger). He immediately took me in charge and became my constant companion during my stay there.

After I had been examined by a doctor who prescribed daily baths, Kolya took me around on a sightseeing tour. The sun was coming up over the parks, cypress trees and places for open air concerts.

After several weeks, I felt much better and was soon chafing at the bit, bored with the regimen and eager to return to Moscow. At this point Kolya suggested that we might try to arrange my accompanying him to his home in Tbilisi (hot springs) and stay for a week before returning to Moscow. I was delighted and had no difficulty in getting both my release from the sanitarium and permission from the school to make the trip.

Tbilisi—the Florence of the Caucasus—was a beautiful modern city, stretching for miles along both sides of the Kura River. It had spacious avenues lined by stately cypress trees; handsome buildings and apartments; a magnificent cathedral, its great central dome flanked by four cupolas, framed against a background of the mountains of the mighty Caucasus chain, with Mount David rising 2,500 feet above the city.

It was a mixed population of mainly Georgians, Armenians, Jews and some Turko-Tartars. Kolya explained that there actually were more Armenians than Georgians living there in the capital of Georgia! He went on to tell me that in the Caucasus, ethnic groups often overlapped their national boundaries as finally constituted. This was particularly so in the case of the Armenians, who were the victims of genocidal persecution and dispersal by Turkey. As a result, there were more Armenians in Azerbaidzhan and Georgia than in the Armenian Republic itself.

In the old days, Georgian nationalism was directed more against the Armenians than against the Russians. The Armenians had a larger merchant class. They dominated commerce and were an obstacle to the growth of the weak Georgian bourgeoisie who retaliated by whipping up national animosity against the Armenians. Hence, national hatred was often directed against rival national groups rather than against the dominant Czarist power, and the Czarist government exploited these animosities fully.

The area was known for bloody battles between the various ethnic groups. But all that ended with the revolution, Kolya said, and with the establishment of the Trans-Caucasian Federation, based on national equality and voluntary consent.

Within the federation, which was composed of three republics (Georgia, Azerbaidzhan and Armenia), the Georgian republic had three minority districts: Abkhazia and Azaria as autonomous republics, and Yugo-Osetia as an autonomous region. National languages and cultures were flourishing under the new regime.

"As you will see, here in Tbilisi we have Georgian, Armenian and Russian theaters," Kolya told me.

Kolya hailed an *izvozchik* and we rode to his apartment, located on one of the broad tree-lined avenues of the city. Arriving there, we were happily greeted by his family. His wife, an attractive young schoolteacher, received me warmly and told me that Kolya had written her about me. They had two beautiful children, a boy of about three and a girl about five. They seemed fascinated with my appearance and couldn't take their eyes off me. I was undoubtedly the first Black man they had ever seen.

On being told by Kolya to "shake hands with the black uncle," the boy hesitantly extended his little hand.

I took it and gently shook it. When he withdrew it, he looked at his hand to see whether some of the black had come off and seemed rather surprised that it hadn't.

"No, it won't come off," I said, and we all laughed. I had experienced this reaction from Russian children in Moscow, and it never failed to amuse me.

The Tseretelis lived in a clean and neatly-furnished three-room apartment on the second floor of the building, with a balcony over the sidewalk. As if reading my thoughts, Kolya said, "Don't worry, we all usually sleep in one room; the other is for my brother who stays here with us. He is out of town, so you can stay in his room"

Kolya was anxious to check in at the Party office where he worked, so we left our baggage and walked to his office a short distance away. I was interested in the people we passed. They looked better dressed than the Russians back in Moscow, their costumes were gayer. Perhaps it was due to the milder climate.

Kolya served as the deputy secretary of the Agitprop Department of the Tbilisi Committee of the Communist Party. He introduced me to his fellow workers in the department; they all seemed glad to see him and remarked how well he looked after his rest. They were speaking Georgian; Kolya asked them to speak in Russian in deference to me. They all seemed to be multilingual. Kolya, I knew, besides his native Georgian, spoke Russian, Armenian and some French. The comrades insisted on calling a conference. Like most Party officials, they were well-informed on both domestic and international questions and were an educated audience.

They asked me my impressions of their country, and they also had questions about the situation in the United States, about the conditions of Blacks. Kolya told them that I was a student at the Lenin School in Moscow and that formerly I had been at KUTVA. They knew about KUTVA as they too had sent students there. They were interested in the work I had done in preparation for the forthcoming Sixth Congress, and they were familiar with Stalin's report to the Fifteenth Party Congress from that December, where he described the international situation. They asked me questions about the international situation and the war danger and we exchanged opinions.

Kolya explained that I was only going to be in town for a couple of days. It was Friday then, and I was scheduled to leave on Sunday. As I remember, we took a car from the pool and two or three people from the office accompanied us on a sightseeing tour along the banks of the river.

We returned to Kolya's home where his wife had a delicious big meal waiting for us: *shashlik,* fruits and pastries. We sat up until late that night telling stories.

The next day we saw a number of places of interest, bathed in the famous hot sulfur springs, went up to the summit of Mount David and saw the old church on the mountain, which dated back centuries, and the mausoleum of famous Georgian poets and patriots. All in all we spent a very enjoyable weekend together.

On Sunday, Kolya and his wife took me to the station and put me on the train for Moscow. Three days later I was back home. I saw Kolya once again when he was on a visit to Moscow and I took him out to dinner.

Chapter 9

Sixth Congress of the Comintern: A Blow Against the Right

The Sixth World Congress of the Comintern, held in Moscow in July and August of 1928, was a historic turning point in the world communist movement. Early in July the first U.S. delegates arrived, anxious to get the "lay of the land" and to scout the political situation in the capital of world revolution. As I recall, Lovestone's group staked out headquarters at the Lux Hotel, while the Foster-Cannon opposition gathered at the Bristol, a short distance further up the street.

A number of us from the Lenin School were on hand when our comrades in the Foster group arrived. We got together to talk with a number of them, though Foster, Cannon and Bittelman were not present. They were anxious to get a report on the situation in the Soviet Party: Which leaders were involved in the right opposition? What was Bukharin doing? Where did he stand?

We gave them a rundown on the situation as we saw it. The issues in the discussion included industrialization, the five-year plan, collectivization, the drive against the *kulaks* and the war danger.

We told them about disagreements in the CPSU. There was talk of a hidden right faction involving such leaders as Rykov, Tomsky and possibly Bukharin. Thus far, however, there were only rumors and speculations. The fight was not yet out in the open, but was confined to the Politburo and the Central Committee. A plenum of the Central Committee had been called on the eve of the Sixth

Congress and was at that moment in session. We told them that we could undoubtedly find out at the congress if there were any new developments.

On their part, our fellow oppositionists ran down the latest developments in the inner-Party struggle at home. We already knew of the findings of a special American Commission which had been set up at the Eighth Plenum of the CI in May 1927. The commission's final resolution had called for the unconditional abolition of all factionalism.[1] Both sides ignored the resolution, however, as the most vicious factionalism continued in the Party. At the Fifth Convention of the CPUSA in the fall of 1927, the Lovestone-Pepper bunch were able to out-maneuver the Foster-Cannon opposition and win control of the organizational apparatus.

Firmly in the saddle of power and riding high, their support came from the belief on the part of the membership that the Lovestone group had the endorsement of the Comintern—a myth assiduously cultivated by the Lovestone cohorts. They were playing a deceitful game of double-bookkeeping, both with respect to the Comintern as well as to the membership at home. Their method was to give lip service to the fight against the right danger, while in practice undermining its application and attempting to pin the label of "right" on the opposition. Typical of this duplicity was their sabotage of the line of the Red International of Labor Unions' (RILU) Fourth Congress, which had called for the formation of the new unions in industries and areas where the workers were unorganized.

In the U.S., the new upsurge in class struggle, combined with the refusal of the AFL craft-type union leaders to organize the majority of industrial workers, demanded that the communists take the lead and organize the unions themselves.

At this point in the discussion it was pointed out that Foster himself was still not clear on the question of the formation of the new unions. Other members of the grouping admitted that they had also vacillated on the question when it was first raised—after the decisions of the Fourth RILU Congress—but it appeared that they now had a better grasp of the matter.

On the question of the estimate of the international situation, they pointed out that their record was clear, whereas the leadership definitely underestimated the economic crisis and radicalization of the workers. They admitted that they were late in pressing the question of independent unions, but now they had finally decided to launch textile, mining and needle trades industrial unions. Lovestone had jumped on the bandwagon at the last minute as a loud trumpeter of the "new unions" line in an attempt to clear his record before the World Congress.

On the whole, our comrades were full of fight and optimistic at the outcome of placing their case before the World Congress. They seemed sure that they would get a favorable hearing. The strategy was to expose the Lovestone-Pepper leadership as the embodiment of the right danger in the U.S. Party and to explode the myth of their Comintern support, thus laying the basis for the victory of the opposition at the next Party convention. This strategy was pressed at the numerous caucus meetings of the opposition bloc which I attended before and during the congress.

But all was not well within the ranks of the opposition; that much was evident at the first meeting of our caucus. Foster, the leader of the minority, came under sharp attack for his vacillation on the question of the new unions from his immediate co-workers, Bittelman, Cannon, Browder and Johnstone. Foster had not been alone in his resistance to the new policy. Most of the members of the minority had vacillated on, if not openly resisted, the decisions of the Ninth Plenum and of the Fourth Congress of the RILU on this question.

But Foster had been the most stubborn, clinging to the old policy based on the organized workers, rather than the unorganized, which placed main emphasis on work within the old reactionary-dominated AFL unions. This policy, which Lozovsky had caricatured as "dancing a quadrille...around the AFL and its various unions,"[2] regarded the organization of unions independent of the AFL as "dual unionism"—a heresy left over from the days of the IWW.

Just a month before, in the May Plenum of the CC of the CPUSA, Foster had written a trade union resolution which was supported by Lovestone. While it called for the building of independent textile and miners' unions, it still reflected many illusions as to the gains communists could make within the AFL. Foster could not bring himself to fully criticize his earlier mistakes, which left Lovestone free to use Foster as a cover for his rightist position.

All of this was bad for the minority; it blurred the image that it sought to present to the congress—that of consistent fighters against the right danger. There was a heated exchange at the first meeting of the minority caucus. As I recall, Foster contended that he had not in principle been against the new turn, but against those who interpreted it as a signal for desertion of the work in the old unions. It was clear that at this point Foster had lost leadership (at least temporarily) of his own group. Bittelman was chosen to make the report for the minority in the American Commission of the congress.

With tempers still frayed, we passed on to a brief exchange on the Afro-American question and the proposed new line on self-determination, which they all knew was coming up for full-dress discussion at the congress. I gave a brief outline of the position and how I had been led to it by the study of the Garvey movement.

Then someone raised the inevitable question. Wouldn't this be construed as an endorsement of Black separation? Does it not conflict with the struggle against segregation?

Foster objected to that implication, maintaining that self-determination didn't necessarily mean separation. He drew an analogy to our trade union policy with respect to Blacks. He pointed out the necessity to fight for the organization of Blacks and whites in one union and against all segregation. But in unions where Jim Crow bars exclude Blacks, Foster said, we support their right to organize their own separate unions. In such situations, the organization of Black unions should be regarded as a step toward eventual unity and not an advocacy of separation.

It was evident that Foster had studied the question and was attempting to relate it to his own practical experience. While his analogy was oversimplified, he was clearly taking a correct stand.

Bittelman, as I recall, seemed the clearest of all. Perhaps this was as a result of his Russian revolutionary background and some acquaintance with the Bolshevik policy on the national question. He pointed out the necessity of making a distinction between the right of separation and separation itself. Separation or independence is only one of the options; there were various forms of federation as Soviet experience had shown. The central question was one of building unity of Black and white workers against U.S. capitalism and this could be achieved only by recognition of the right of self-determination.

I was happy about the support given to the position by Foster and Bittelman. As the main theoretician of the minority, Bittelman had a great deal of influence. Certainly there was unclarity among the caucus members, but by and large I was favorably impressed by this first airing of the question. After all, I reasoned, the proposed new line did represent a radical shift from past policy. There seemed to be a modesty among these people and a sincere desire to give the matter a full hearing.

I felt that on the whole my comrades were an honest lot. Despite factional considerations, they were motivated by the overriding desire to achieve clarity on a question which up to that point had frustrated the Party's best efforts.

In the caucus meetings, I had my first close-up view of some of the leaders with whom I was to work in the future. Mostly from the midwest, with genuine roots in the American labor tradition, they were a pretty impressive bunch. Most had broad mass experience—especially in the trade union field. The roots of the Lovestone group were much more grounded among former functionaries and propagandists of the Socialist Party.

William Z. Foster, leader of the minority bloc, was also the leader in the Party's trade union work. A self-educated man, he had worked at a number of trades, including longshoreman, seaman, lumberjack, street-car conductor and railroad worker.[3] Born in Massachusetts, he spent his early childhood in Philadelphia and came into prominence as a trade union leader in Chicago.

He had been a left socialist, then, for a brief period, joined with the Wobblies. He soon clashed with them on the issue of dual unionism. Foster himself opted for the French syndicalist policy of boring from within the established unions. He joined the Communist Party in the summer of 1921 and brought an entire group of trade unionists with him.

In Chicago, Foster was deeply involved in trade union work. He had served as business agent for the Brotherhood of Railroad Car Men of America; was a founder of the TUEL; initiated the nationwide drive to organize the stockyard workers in 1917; and was leader of the 1919 steel strike, the attempt to organize 365,000 steelworkers. It was in this strike that he became a nationally known left trade union figure.

The first time I saw Foster in action was at the Fourth Party Convention in Chicago in the summer of 1925. I remember him angrily pacing with clenched fists back and forth across the platform behind Ruthenberg as the latter berated him from the rostrum. Here in the caucus, he was again an angry man, but under the lashing of his friends and co-factionalists.

Jack Johnstone, a Scotsman, still had the Scot's burr in his speech. An ex-Wobbly and close co-worker of Foster, he had been one of the young radical Chicago trade unionists. A member of the Chicago Federation of Labor from the Painters Union, Johnstone was a leader in the TUEL. I had met him at the Fourth RILU Congress. His name was familiar to me because of his role as a leader in the organization of the Chicago stockyard workers in which my sister had been involved. Johnstone was the organizer of the drive for the Chicago Federation of Labor and later became secretary of the Chicago Stockyards Council with 55,000 white and Black members.

On the eve of the 1919 riots, he had helped to organize a parade of white stockyard unionists through the Southside in solidarity with the Black workers. I had the pleasure of working with Johnstone later in Pittsburgh and in Chicago, where he was industrial organizer for the district. He was a quiet, unassuming guy with a wry sense of humor.

Earl Browder of Wichita, Kansas, served his ideological apprenticeship as a radical trade unionist in the socialist and cooperative movements. Arrested in 1917 on charges of defying the draft law, he spent three years in the federal penitentiary at Leavenworth, Kansas.

I had known Browder briefly in Moscow while he was rep to the Profintern, before he went on a two year mission to the Far East for that organization. We KUTVA students would often visit him at his room in the Lux Hotel where he would play checkers with Golden, who usually won. He told us that when he was at Leavenworth, he had met a number of former members of the Black Twenty-fourth Infantry who had been involved in the mutiny-riot in Houston, Texas, in the summer of 1917. He told us that they often played baseball together in prison.

At the time, Browder seemed to me to be a quiet, modest, unassuming man. But at this caucus meeting, something had happened which seemed to have transformed him into a "new" Browder. Though long associated with Foster, he now seemed bent on not only asserting his independence, but on establishing his own claim to leadership.

At one point in the heated discussion on trade union policy, he exclaimed sarcastically: "You expect to get the support of the Comintern, but you're all divided among yourselves! There's a Cannon group, a Bittelman Group, a Foster Group—well, I'm for the Browder Group!"

No one seemed to take his remark seriously, but less than a year later Browder was to emerge as secretary of the Party.

James P. Cannon was also from Kansas—a tall, raw-boned midwesterner of Irish descent. He came from the same trade union background as the other caucus leaders; he had been a traveling organizer for the Wobblies and an editor of a number of labor papers. He was a supporter of Trotsky, although he didn't admit it at the congress. Later he split from the Party and helped form the Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party.

Bill Dunne was a man of impressive credentials. Raised in Minnesota, Dunne entered the trade union movement as an electrician. Then in Butte, Montana, during World War I, he edited the Butte *Daily Bulletin* (official organ of the Montana Federation of Labor and the Butte Central Labor Council).

Dunne had been secretary of a local of electricians, vice-president of the Montana Federation of Labor and a member of the state legislature (on the Democratic ticket, which in Butte was labor controlled). He helped organize the Socialist Party Branch of Butte and brought it into the Communist Labor Party in 1919.

I got to know Bill quite well; he was in the Soviet Union for some months before the Sixth Congress as a Profintern rep. I first met him through Clarence Hathaway, and both were associated with the Cannon sub-group. Bill was familiar with the emerging line on self-determination and supported it. He had written a number of articles on Black workers in the mid-twenties.

To me, he was the most colorful figure in our caucus and a man of unusual brilliance. Keen-witted, sharp in debate, he had an extraordinary sense of humor. Of Irish and French-Canadian parentage, Bill was short and heavy-set, with black bushy eyebrows. He cut a romantic figure on the streets of Moscow in his Georgian *rabochka* and sheathed dagger at his waist. I had a close friendship with Bill which lasted over a number of years.

Alexander Bittelman was a Russian Jew who had emigrated to the United States when in his early twenties. A little fellow, Bittelman was both ascetic and scholarly. He had been in the socialist movement in Russia and continued on in his political work in the U.S. A serious Marxist student, Bittelman was the main theoretician for the Foster group.

THE LOVESTONE CAUCUS

The Lovestone-Pepper caucus was meeting at the same time. They too were mapping out plans for the battle on the floor of the congress. Lovestone also had his troubles—most involved the shedding of his opportunist reputation for that of "crusader against the right danger."

Most of the "big guns" were on the scene: Lovestone, Pepper, Weinstone and Wolfe. Gitlow, Bedacht and others were left at home as caretakers; Gitlow ostensibly to carry on the Party's election campaign (in which he was vice-presidential candidate).

While I was the only Black in the minority caucus, the Lovestone-Pepper caucus claimed the allegiance, if not the ardent support, of a number of leading Black comrades. In the nine months since the convention, the Lovestone-Pepper leadership had attempted to patch its fences in the work among Blacks. Otto Huiswood, now a member of the Central Committee and district organizer in Buffalo, was the first Black district organizer. Richard B. Moore was assigned to the International Labor Defense, and Cyril P. Briggs was editor of *The Crusader* News Service, which was subsidized by the Party.

But none of these could be called ardent supporters of Lovestone. They were all dissatisfied with the status of Afro-American work, which was reflected in the small number of Black cadre in the Party. In general, it was still difficult to draw a hard and fast distinction between the factions on questions concerning Afro-American work.

Blacks in the Lovestone delegation included H.V. Phillips and Fort-Whiteman (both directly from the United States) and students from the graduating group at KUTVA—Otto, Farmer and Williams (Golden had already left for home). The group also included William L. Patterson, the young attorney who had worked with the Party on the Sacco-Vanzetti case and who had been sent to KUTVA just before the congress.

James Ford, who worked in the Profintern and was to become an outstanding Party leader in the thirties, stood aloof from both groups as I remember. His sympathies seemed to be with the Foster-Cannon opposition, however.

Among the Blacks attending the congress, I was the only one supporting the new line on self-determination. The others insisted that "it was a race question, not a national question," implying that the solution lay through assimilation under socialism. Probing deeper, I found that most were hung up on a purist and non-Marxist concept of the class struggle which ruled out all strivings towards nationality and Black identity as divisive, running counter to internationalism and Black and white unity.

It was an American version of the "pure proletarian revolution" concept; a domestic manifestation of the old deviation in the socialist and communist movements against which Lenin, Stalin and others had fought in the development of the Bolshevik policy on the national and colonial question.

Recalling that I myself had held the same view just a few months back, I felt that the resistance of Blacks in the Party to self-determination would be overcome through exposure in the discussions at the congress of the proposed new line. I had no doubt that they would come to see, as I had, the grand irony of a situation in which we Blacks, who so vociferously complained about our white comrades underestimating the revolutionary significance of the Afro-American question, were guilty of the same sin. For the revolutionary significance of the struggle for Black rights lay precisely in the recognition of its character as essentially that of the struggle of an oppressed nation against U.S. imperialism.

At this point, the opposition to the idea of Black self-determination was to receive theoretical support from an unexpected source. This opposition came from Professor Sik, my old teacher at KUTVA, who was still teaching the Black students there. Sik contended that bourgeois race ideology, which fostered racial prejudices, was the prime factor in the oppression of U.S. Blacks. Therefore, their fight for equal rights should be regarded not as that of an oppressed nation striving for equality via self-determination but, on the contrary, as the fight of an oppressed racial minority (similar to the Jews under czarism) for assimilation as equals into U.S. society.

Sik undoubtedly thought that he was presenting original views, but stripped of their pseudo-Marxist phraseology, they were the old bourgeois-liberal reformist views. He slurred over the socioeconomic factors that lay at the base of the question, factors which call for the completion of the agrarian-democratic revolution in the South. His perspective divested the Black movement of its independent revolutionary thrust, reducing it to a bourgeois-liberal opposition to race prejudice.

However, Sik's thesis continued to be used as a crutch for the right opposition over the next year or so; it appeared in the *Communist International* (organ of the Comintern) in the midst of the Sixth World Congress.[4] But the pressure for a turn to the left in this work was to flush it out into the open along with other right-wing views on the question.

Foremost among these were the views of Jay Lovestone. His view of Southern Blacks as a "reserve of capitalist reaction" provided a theoretical rationale for the Party's chronic underestimation of the question. This was clear in his report to the Fifth Party Convention in which he contended that:

> The migration of Negroes from the South to the North is another means of proletarianization, consequently the existence of this group as a reserve of capitalist reaction is likewise being undermined.[5]

Lovestone held that the masses of Blacks in the South become potentially revolutionary only through migration to the industrial centers in the north and participation in class struggle along with white workers. This viewpoint, which was later to become a cornerstone for his theory of "American exceptionalism," was first outlined in his report for the Fifth Convention of the Party and again in his report in the *Daily Worker* in February 1928.[6] But these articles passed unnoticed at the time. It was only on the eve of the Sixth World Congress and under the pressure of the new line that we became alerted to Lovestone's views.

The general meeting of the American delegation took place the day before the opening of the congress. All factions were represented but, as I recall, there were no fireworks. By that time, lines were clearly drawn and neither faction was trying to convince the other. On our part, we were saving our ammunition for the battle on the floor of the congress and its commissions.

Apparently there had been some objections in the Lovestone group to the proposed new line on self-determination. To mollify these people, Lovestone stated that he stood for the right of self-determination of oppressed peoples everywhere; surely he said, no communist could oppose this right. I assumed that he regarded the slogan as some sort of showcase principle; something to be declared but which did not commit its advocates to any special line of action. Lovestone knew which way the wind was blowing and was clearly trying to straddle the fence on the issue.

The delegates at this meeting were assigned to the various commissions; there was no struggle over the assignments as it was understood that all commissions had to include members of both factions. These commissions included the American Negro/South African Commission, Colonial Commission, Trade Union Commission, and Program Commission.

THE SIXTH WORLD CONGRESS

On July 17, 1928, 532 delegates representing fifty-seven parties and nine organizations assembled in the Hall of the Trade Unions. The delegation from the United States was a large one—twenty-nine delegates, including twenty voting and nine advisory delegates. The Sixth Congress convened under the slogan of "War Against the Right Danger and the Rightist Conciliators."

The period since the February plenum of the Comintern had been marked by the emergence of a clearly defined right opportunist deviation in most of the parties. They advanced the perspective of continuous capitalist recovery and the easing of the class struggle. In the realm of tactics this meant a continuation of the old "united front from above" and a reliance on social reformist trade union leaders. In the U.S., the right was to find its foremost exponents in the Lovestone-Pepper leadership, which emphasized the strength of U.S. capitalism and its ability to postpone the crisis.

A right opposition had also begun to develop in the CPSU, headed by Bukharin; Rykov, chairman of the Council of People's Commissions; and Tomsky, heading the Soviet Trade Unions. This group opposed the programs of the Stalinist majority of the Central Committee with respect to the goals of the new Five Year Plan, which called for intensified industrialization, collectivization, and the drive against the *kulaks*. The right deviation in the CPSU and in the other parties of the Comintern had a common source—overestimation of the strength of world capitalism. The congress was faced with the need to answer these critics by deepening its analysis of the period and by spelling out more clearly the policy flowing from it.

In the Soviet Party, the disagreement had come to a head prior to its plenum of July 1928, which adjourned just before the Sixth Congress. The differences, however, were hushed up by a resolution unanimously adopted by both groups which stated that there were no differences in the leadership of the CPSU. The agreement undoubtedly expressed the desire of the Soviet leadership to keep the congress from becoming an arena for discussion of Soviet problems before they had been finally thrashed out within their own Party.

The delegates, however, were not unaware of the struggle in the Soviet Party. They gathered in an atmosphere charged with rumor and speculation about differences within the CPSU. The questions in our minds were: Who represented the right danger in the CPSU, the leading Party of the CI? What was the role of Bukharin? What had been the outcome of the discussions in the plenum of the CPSU? How would the congress be affected? We did not have long to wait for answers to these questions. Differences developed over sections of Bukharin's *Report on the International Situation and Tasks of the Comintern.*[7]

In his report which was distributed on July 18, at the second session of the congress, Bukharin analyzed the post-World War I international situation, dividing it into three periods. He defined the first (1917-1923) as one of revolutionary upsurge; the second (1924-1927) as a period of partial stabilization of capitalism; and the third (1928 on) as one of capitalist reconstruction. Bukharin made no clear distinction between the second and third periods; the latter was simply a continuation of the second. According to his characterization, there was nothing new at the present time to shake capitalist stabilization. On the contrary, capitalism was continuing to "reconstruct itself."

On this question Bukharin was challenged by his own Soviet delegation which submitted a series of twenty amendments to the thesis. These characterized the third period as one in which partial stabilization was coming to an end. Later, in his criticism of Bukharin's position, Stalin pointed out the decisive importance of a correct estimate of the third period. The question involved here was: "Are we passing through a period of decline of the revolutionary movement...or are we passing through a period when the conditions are maturing for a new revolutionary upsurge, a period of preparation of the working class for future class battles? It is on this that the tactical line of the Communist Parties depends."[8]

At first, all of this was somewhat confusing to us. In his opening report Bukharin had himself declared the right deviation the "greatest danger" to the Comintern. But in his characterization of the third period as one of virtual capitalist recovery he had adopted the main thesis of the right. He had also put himself in the awkward position of being rejected by his own delegation. But as Stalin was later to point out, it was his own fault for failing to discuss his report in advance with the Soviet delegation, as was customary. Instead he distributed his report to all delegations simultaneously.[9]

In accordance with our battle plan to expose the Pepper-Lovestone leadership as the embodiment of the right deviation in the American Party, our caucus took the offensive. Even before the discussion on Bukharin's report began, our minority had submitted a document entitled "The Right Danger and the American Party." It was signed by J.W. Johnstone, M. Gomez, W.F. Dunne, J.P. Cannon, W.Z. Foster, A. Bittelman and G. Siskind.[10]

The document contained a bill of particulars in which we sought to point out that the rightist tendencies and mistakes of the Lovestone-Pepper leadership added up to a right line.

Our attack, however, was hobbled by blemishes in the stateside record of our own caucus. At that point it would have been hard to discern any principled political differences between the majority or minority. Nevertheless, differences were developing on the estimation of the third period and U.S. imperialism.[11]

Pepper and Lovestone exaggerated the might of U.S. imperialism and spoke only of the weakness of the U.S. labor movement and the class struggle in this country. But the minority had also wavered on the question of building independent trade unions, the logical follow-through of the correct estimate of the objective situation in terms of practical policy.

On the Negro question, the minority record up to that point had been no better than that of the majority. This fact was quickly pointed out by Otto and others. Both groups had shared the same mistakes. As Foster later observed, both factions had "traditionally considered the Negro question as that of a persecuted racial minority of workers and as basically a simple trade union matter."[12] It was this orientation which explains the Party's shortcomings in this field of work. But now, the tentative endorsement by our caucus of the proposed new line on the Afro-American question strengthened its position vis-a-vis the majority leadership.

The prospects for our minority were brightened by the difficulties of Lovestone's friend and mentor, Bukharin. Corridor rumors concerning his right-wing proclivities were now being confirmed by his differences with his own Soviet delegation on the character of the third period.

The congress was now settling down to work. A number of commissions were formed to discuss and formulate resolutions on the main subjects confronting the congress. Among them were: 1) A Commission on Program, to complete the drafting of a program for the Comintern; 2) one on the Trade Union question, to apply the struggle against right opportunism to the trade union field; and 3) a commission on the Colonial Question which discussed strategy and tactics of the liberation movements in the colonies and semi-colonies and the tasks of the Comintern. There were also several commissions on the special problems of individual parties.

My major concern, however, was the Negro Commission, which was to take up the problem of the U.S. Blacks and the South African question. Although set up as an independent commission, in reality it was a subcommittee of the Colonial Commission. The resolutions formulated by it were included in the final draft of the congress's thesis on the Revolutionary Movement in the Colonies. The Negro Commission was set up on August 6, at the twenty-third session of the congress. It was a memorable day, particularly for us Black communists—a day to which we all had looked forward. At last there was to be a full-dress discussion on the question.

We listened attentively as the German comrade Remmele, chairman of the session, read off on behalf of the presidium the list of members and officers who would comprise the commission. It was an impressive list and indicated the high priority given the question by the congress. Thirty-two delegates, representing eighteen countries, including the United States, South Africa, Great Britain, the Soviet Union, France, Germany, Belgium, Italy, Spain, Turkey, India, Palestine and Syria were members of the commission. Impressive also were its officers: the chairman, Ottomar Kuusinen, was a member of the CI Secretariat and chairman of the Colonial Commission; the vice-chairman Petrovsky (Bennett) was also chairman of the Anglo-American Secretariat; and the recording secretary, Mikhailov (Williams), was a former CI representative to the American Party.

The delegates from the U.S. included five Blacks: myself, Jones (Otto Hall), Farmer (Roy Mahoney), James Ford and, I believe, Harold Williams; plus two white comrades, Bittelman and Lovestone. Others included Sidney Bunting of South Africa; Fokin and Nasanov, representing the Young Communist International; the Swiss, Humbert-Droz, a top CI official; Heller, from the Communist fraction of the Profintern; and several members of the Soviet delegation to the congress.

Participation in commission meetings was not limited to its members, however. Among the important figures who spoke in the discussions were Manuilsky, a CI official, and the Ukrainian, Skrypnik, both members of the Soviet delegation. The hall was always crowded with interested observers.

The first order of business before the Commission was the Negro question. It was introduced by Petrovsky, who, as I recall, stressed the need for a radical turn in the policy of the American Party with respect to its work among Blacks. He referred to the Negro Subcommittee, set up earlier in the year by the Anglo-American Secretariat, which was given the task of preparing materials on the question for the Sixth Congress.

Petrovsky described the two positions which emerged from this subcommittee.

One held that the weaknesses of the Party's Negro work was a result of an incorrect line. The partisans of this position regarded Blacks in the South as an oppressed nation and recommended that the right of self-determination be raised as an orientation slogan in their struggle for equality.

The other position, he said, held that the question was one of a "racial minority" whose immediate and ultimate demands were embraced by the slogan of complete economic, social and political equality. The supporters of this position attributed the weaknesses in the Party's Afro-American work to the underestimation of the importance of work among Blacks. This resulted, in turn, from the survivals of racial prejudices within the ranks of the Party and its leadership. This position did not challenge the Party's line, but called for its more energetic application.

As I recall, Petrovsky stated that he himself favored the position on self-determination. He did not see it as a negation of the slogan of social equality which, he said, would remain the main slogan for the Black masses. But in the Black Belt, where Blacks are in the majority, in addition to the slogan of equality the Party must raise another slogan—the right of self-determination. For here, equality without the right of Blacks to enforce it is but an empty phrase. At the same time he expressed agreement with the comrades who contended that the hangovers of racial prejudice in the Party were a main obstacle to the Party's effective work among Blacks. He stressed the need to fight against the ideology of white chauvinism, a principle block to the unity of Black and white workers.

Petrovsky then referred the comrades to the material before them. It included the document by Nasanov and myself, summarizing our position in support of the self-determination thesis. The document contained a criticism of current Party activities and policies and condemned Pepper's May 30th resolution, which had made no reference to the Party's tasks in the South.[13] It also criticized the completely northern orientation of the American Negro Labor Congress, as contained in the policy statements of its leaders, Lovett Fort-Whiteman and H.V. Phillips. Finally, it criticized Lovestone's characterization of Southern Blacks as "reserves of capitalist reaction."

Other documents presented to the commission were a statement by Dunne and Hathaway supporting the self-determination viewpoint and a document by Sik opposing the proposed new line. Sik argued that Blacks were a racial minority whose immediate and ultimate demands were embraced by the slogan of full social equality.[14]

Later in the discussion, Pepper submitted a document containing his proposals for a "Negro Soviet Republic" in the South, arguing that Southern Blacks were not just a nation but virtually a colony within the body of the United States of America.[15]

Among the American delegates who spoke in favor of the proposed new line were Bittelman, Foster and Dunne. As I remember, all were self-critical. Bittelman, however, emphasized the dual role of the Black working class envisioned by the new line: first, its role as a basic and constituent element of the American working class and, second, its leadership of the national liberation movement of Black people.

I do not remember Lovestone speaking. If he did, he did not openly attack the proposed new line, for that would not have been his style. It was clear to all, however, that he had strong reservations. Sam Darcy of the Young Communist League was, as I remember, the only white comrade who openly opposed the proposed new line.

But the strongest opposition to the self-determination thesis both in the commission and on the floor of the congress was from the Black comrades James Ford and Otto Hall. In their arguments it was evident that they relied heavily on Professor Sik and his "new" theory on "race problems." Up to that point, neither Nasanov nor I had paid much attention to Sik. But now after listening to Otto and Ford we suddenly realized the danger his theories posed to clarity on this vital question.

Sik had evidently been working hard on his thesis which he was now proselytizing with almost evangelic zeal. He had, if not a captive audience, at least a willing one among the Black students at KUTVA where he taught (of all subjects!) Leninism. Now suddenly it seemed that Sik had become cast in the role of chief theoretician of the opposition to the proposed new policy; in their speeches Otto and Ford repeated verbatim many of his arguments.

For example, both Otto and Ford insisted that U.S. Negroes were a racial minority rather than an oppressed nation or an oppressed national minority. (They used these two latter terms interchangeably at the time.) They ruled out all national movements among U.S. Blacks as reactionary. According to Ford, such movements were led by the "chauvinistic" Black bourgeoisie who wanted a freer hand to exploit the Black masses. These movements, he argued, "play into the hands of the bourgeoisie by arresting the revolutionary class movement of the Negro masses and further widening the gulf between the white and similar oppressed groups."[16] He also averred that Blacks lack the characteristics of a nation. There was not the question of one nation oppressing and exploiting another nation. "In the United States," Ford continued, "we find no economic system separating the two races. The interests of the Negro and white workers are the same. The Negro peasant and the white peasant interests are the same." The only problem, he contended, was one of racial differences of the color of the skin, barriers set up by the bourgeoisie.[17]

Otto sharpened the argument and contended that Blacks were "not developing any characteristics of a national minority...there exists no national entity as such among...Negroes." Continuing along the same line, Otto saw no community of interest between the Black bourgeoisie and the Black toilers, whom, he argued, "are completely separated (from each other) as far as class interests are concerned." In sum, he contended that "historical development has tended to create in him (the Negro) the desire to be considered a part of the American nation."[18]

What then were the objectives of Black liberation? They were, according to Sik, the striving of Blacks for intermingling and amalgamation. I was astounded and dismayed. This seemed to me to be a bourgeois liberal-assimilationist position cloaked in pseudo-Marxist rhetoric.

A few days before on the floor of the congress, Ford and Otto complained bitterly about the rampant white chauvinism in the Party and the widespread underestimation of the significance of

Afro-American work. Could they not see that they were playing into the hands of the white chauvinist downgraders of the Black movement? They had conceded them their main premise: that the movement for Black equality in itself had no revolutionary potential.

Sik's theory had stripped the struggle for equality of all revolutionary content; it involved no radical social change, that is, completion of the land and democratic revolution and securing of political power in the South. It was just a struggle against racial ideology.

How was it possible for Otto and Ford and other Black comrades to fall into this trap? They had separated racism, the most salient external manifestation of Black oppression, from its socio-economic roots, reducing the struggle for equality to a movement against prejudice. It was a theory which even liberal reformists could support.

And why did they downgrade the revolutionary nature of the Black struggle for equality? I could only assume that it was an attempt on their part to fit the Afro-American question into the simplistic frame of "pure proletarian class struggle." This theory ruled out all nationalist movements as divisive and distracting from the struggle for socialism. Lovestone's idea of the Black peasantry in the South being a "reserve of capitalist reaction" was the logical outcome of this kind of thinking.

What was clear to me was that our thesis of self-determination had correctly elevated the fight for Black rights to a revolutionary position, whereas the proponents of Sik's theories attempted to downgrade the movement, seeing it as a minor aspect of the class struggle. Our thesis put the question in the proper perspective: that is, as a struggle attacking the very foundation of American imperialism, an integral part of the struggle of the American working class as a whole.

The sad fact was that Otto, Ford and other partisans of Sik's theory seemed completely unaware that they had come to a practical agreement with those white chauvinists who denied the revolutionary character of the Black liberation struggle in the false name of socialism.

Nasanov, sitting beside me, undoubtedly had similar thoughts. He muttered something in Russian that sounded like, "Lord forgive them, for they know not what they do."

During an interval in the Negro Commission sessions, I cornered Otto in the corridor and accused him and Ford of downgrading the liberation struggle and playing into the hands of the white chauvinist element in the Party. How, I asked him, did he expect to fight those responsible for the neglect of work among Blacks when he accepted their main premise—that the struggle of Blacks was not of itself revolutionary and that it only becomes so when they (the Blacks) fight directly for socialism?

Otto indignantly denied this and accused me of allowing the question to be used as a factional football by the Foster group. I conceded that they were not all clear. But, I added heatedly, at least they had begun to recognize that their position had been wrong and they were trying to change it.

We broke off the discussion; it was obviously useless to pursue the matter further. We were both getting emotional. No doubt our relationship had become rather strained as a result of our political differences. I was terribly saddened by this growing rift between my brother and me. True, I no longer thought of him as my political mentor, but nevertheless I felt he was a serious and dedicated revolutionary.

What, I wondered, were the pressures that pushed Black proletarian comrades like Otto and Ford into this position? Foremost was their misguided but honest desire to amalgamate Black labor into the general labor movement. Nationalism, they felt, was a block to labor unity. They failed to recognize the revolutionary element in Black nationalism. I myself had held the same position only a few months earlier, but then I hadn't studied Leninism under Sik.

I remember running into Nasanov. We walked down the hall arm in arm and he asked me if I was going to speak. I said, "I don't know, should I?"

Knowing my shyness, he laughed and said, "We've got them on the run. We've submitted our resolution and supporting documents."

We were then accosted by Manuilsky whom I had met before. He wanted to know if I was the only Black supporting the self-determination position. I told him that thus far I was. "How did that happen?" he asked. That was a question I was still trying to answer myself. But before I could reply he said, "Oh, I know. They are all good class-conscious comrades. But I understand them. We Bolsheviks had the same type of deviation within the party." He turned away to greet somebody else.

And well he should understand, I reflected, for Manuilsky had been one of the leading Ukrainian Communists referred to in our class on Leninism, who, during the Revolution in the Ukraine, had been guilty of the same deviation.

He had been one of those whom the Bolsheviks had called "abstract Marxists," those unable to relate Marxism to the concrete experience of their own people. On that occasion he resisted the resolution of the CC drafted by Lenin which made necessary concessions to Ukrainian nationalism; these included a softer line on the *kulaks* and the establishment of Ukrainian as the national language.

What about Comrade Pepper's new slogan for a "Negro Soviet Republic?" Had he undergone a sudden conversion to the cause of Black nationhood? Was this the same Pepper who had completely ignored the South in his May thesis and who had, during the Program Commission at the Fifth Congress of the CI (1924), asserted that Blacks in the US wanted nothing to do with the slogan of self-determination?

Sudden shifts in position were not new to Pepper who, as we have seen, was a man unrestrained by principles. Lominadze had branded Pepper on the floor of the congress as a man of "inadequate firmness of principle and backbone. He always agrees with those who are his seniors even if a minute ago he defended an utterly different viewpoint."[19]

The Commission rejected Pepper's slogan on the grounds that, first, it actually negated the principle of the right of self-determination by making the Party's support of it contingent upon the acceptance by Blacks of the Soviet governmental form. Secondly, it was an opportunist attempt to skip over the intermediate stage of preparation and mobilization of the Black masses around their immediate demands.

Pepper's position was actually an attempt to outflank the new position from the "left." Clearly he sought to grab the spotlight, to upstage the move towards a new policy. Perhaps he thought that the left-sounding term "Soviet" would make the new stress on the national character of the question more palatable to his factional cohorts of the pure revolutionary persuasion.

Otto seemed to have nibbled on the bait; at least he felt it did not contradict his position. In his previously quoted speech he stated, "There is no objection on our part on (sic) the principle of a Soviet Republic for Negroes in America. The point we are concerned with here is how to organize these Negroes at present on the basis of their everyday needs for the revolution." [20]

In this case, however, Pepper had overreached himself, having jumped over the bandwagon instead of on it.

Despite Pepper's defeat in the commission, he still had a card or two up his sleeve. This we were to find to our surprise and anger when we received the October 1928 issue of *The Communist,* official organ of the CPUSA. Prominent among the articles was Pepper's on "American Negro Problems," which presented his call for a "Negro Soviet Republic." But that was not all; the article was also published simultaneously in pamphlet form by the American Party. Neither the article nor the pamphlet was labeled as a discussion paper, which gave them the appearance of being official statements of the new policy.

Pepper's article had originally appeared in the *Communist International,* organ of the Comintern, as one of a series of discussion articles.[21] The other articles were one by Ford and Patterson (Wilson),[22] "The Comintern Programme and the Racial Problem" by Sik, and "The Negro Problem and the Tasks of the CPUSA," by me.[23]

Of these, Sik's was the only one to appear in the English edition of the magazine. This was because the English edition had suspended publication for technical reasons from September to December.

But Pepper also sent his article to *The Communist,* organ of the

American Party, where it appeared in October 1928. Because the official resolutions of the congress were not published until January of the following year, Pepper's distorted version of the new line was the first document available to American Party members. The result was considerable confusion and misunderstanding.

Particularly aggravating was that Pepper filched the basic facts of our analysis—national character, Black Belt territory, etc.—distorting them into a vulgar caricature of our thesis. This latest piece of chicanery did nothing to enhance Pepper's image in Moscow where it was already on the wane. It was, however, well-received in the U.S. where he still had considerable influence.

ESSENCE OF THE NEW LINE

The CI's new line on the Afro-American question was released by the ECCI in two documents. The first was the full resolution of the commission, which addressed itself to the concrete issues raised in the discussion. The second was a summary of the full resolution, worked out in the commission under the direction of Kuusinen, for incorporation in the congress thesis on the "Revolutionary Movement in the Colonies and Semi-Colonies."[24]

The resolution rejected the assimilationist race theories upon which the line of the Party had been based. It defined the Black movement as "national revolutionary" in character on the grounds that "the various forms of oppression of Negroes....concentrated mainly in the so-called 'Black Belt' provide the necessary conditions for a national revolutionary movement."

Stressing the agrarian roots of the problem it declared that Southern Blacks "are....not reserves of capitalist reaction," as Lovestone had contended, but they were on the contrary, "reserves of the revolutionary proletariat" whose "objective position facilitates their transformation into a revolutionary force under the leadership of the proletariat."

The new line committed the Party to champion the Black struggle for "complete and real equality.....for the abolition of all kinds of racial, social, and political inequalities." It called for an "energetic struggle against any exhibition of white chauvinism" and for "active resistance to lynching."

At the same time, the resolution stressed the need for Black revolutionary workers to resist "petty bourgeois nationalist tendencies" such as Garveyism. It declared that the industrialization of the South and the growth of the Black proletariat was the "most important phenomenon of recent years." The enlargement of this class, it asserted, offers the possiblity of consistent revolutionary leadership of the movement.

It called upon the Party to "strengthen its work among Negro proletarians," drawing into its ranks the most conscious elements. It was also to fight for the acceptance of Black workers into unions from which they are barred, but this fight did not exclude the organization of separate trade unions when necessary. It called for the concentration of work in the South to organize the masses of soil-tillers. And finally, the new line committed the Party to put forth the slogan of the right of self-determination.

> In those regions of the South in which compact Negro masses are living, it is essential to put forward the slogan of the Right of Self-determination...a radical transformation of the Agrarian structure of the Southern States is one of the basic tasks of the revolution. Negro Communists must explain to the Negro workers and peasants that only their close union with the white proletariat and joint struggle with them against the American bourgeoisie can lead to their liberation from barbarous exploitation, and that only the victorious proletarian revolution will completely and permanently solve the agrarian and national question of the Southern United States in the interests of the overwhelming majority of the Negro population of the country.[25]

SOUTH AFRICA

There was keen interest as the Commission moved to the next point on the agenda—South Africa. Here again it was a fight against the denial of the national liberation movement in the name of socialism, the same right deviation on new turf. In the South African setting, where four-fifths of the population were black colonial slaves, the deviation was particularly glaring.

It was true that in the past year or so the South African Party had intensified its work among the natives, a "turn to the masses." As the Simons noted, by 1928 there were 1,600 African members out of a total of 1,750 in the Party. The year before there were only 200 African members.[26]

The Party had pursued a vigorous policy in the building of Black trade unions, in conducting strikes, and in fighting the most vicious forms of national oppression—pass laws and the like. The Party's official organ, *The South African Worker,* had been revived on a new basis. More than half the articles were now written in three Bantu languages: Xhosa, Zulu and Tsotho.

Sidney Bunting, leader of the South African Party, had emerged as a stalwart fighter for Native rights in the defense of Thibedi, a framed-up Native communist leader. As a result about a hundred Natives had been recruited into the Party, and two were now on the Central Committee. On the whole, the Party was making a turn toward the Native masses. But it still lacked the theory which would enable it to tap their tremendous revolutionary potential.

As did most of the white leading cadre, Bunting exhibited a paternalism with respect to the Natives. This paternalism was rooted in an abiding lack of faith in the revolutionary potential of the Native movement. They saw the South African revolution in terms of the direct struggle for socialism. This white leadership, brought up in the old socialist traditions and comprised mainly of European immigrants, had not yet absorbed Lenin's teachings on the national and colonial questions.

These shortcomings had been brought sharply to the attention of the Comintern by La Guma. The result was the resolution on the South African question which La Guma, Nasanov and I had worked on the previous winter. It recommended that the Party put forward and work for an independent Native South African Republic with full and equal rights for all races as a stage toward a Workers and Peasants Republic. This was to be accompanied by the slogan "Return the land to the Natives."

The resolution was not only rejected by the Party leadership, but they had now sent a lily-white delegation to the congress to fight for its repeal. The delegation consisted of Sidney Bunting, Party chairman, his wife Rebecca, and Edward Roux, a young South African communist leader who was then studying at Oxford. Whatever their hopes were on arrival in Moscow, they now seemed dejected and subdued. Having sat through the discussion on the Afro-American question, they undoubtedly saw the handwriting on the wall.

From the start, the South African delegation was on the defensive, having been confronted by other delegates with the inevitable question: Where are the Natives?

What answer could they give? It was evident to all that theirs was a mission on which Natives could not be trusted, even those "brought up in the old tradition," to use the phrase of Roux.

We Blacks asked about La Guma and they replied, "Oh, he was here just a short while ago and had his say. We felt that the other viewpoint should be represented."

After copies of the ECCI resolution on South Africa had been distributed, the South African delegates took the floor before the entire congress to challenge the line of the resolution. The South African revolution, they argued, was a socialist revolution with no intermediate stage, an argument which posed a sort of South African exceptionalism.

The argument ran that South Africa was not a colonial country. Bunting then contended that "South Africa is, owing to its climate, what is called a 'white man's country' where whites can and do live not merely as planters and officials, but as a whole nation of all classes, established there for centuries, of Dutch and English composition."[27]

Bunting's statement came under attack on the floor of the congress, notably by Bill Dunne. Bunting defended himself, holding that his description was solely factual and was not an "advocacy of 'White South Africa,' . . . the very view we have combatted for the last thirteen years."[28]

In essence, Bunting's views liquidated the struggle of the black peasantry in South Africa. He declared that they were "being rapidly proletarianized," and further that "the native agrarian masses as such have not yet shown serious signs of revolt." Hence the slogan of "Return the land to the Natives " would antagonize white workers with its implication of a *"black race dictatorship."*[29]

Rebecca Bunting spoke in the commission sessions. Addressing herself to the land question, she denied that the land belonged to the Bantu in the first place. Both the Bantu from central Africa and the Afrikaaners coming up from Capetown had forced the aboriginal Hottentots and Bushmen off their land. Thus, there was no special Native land question.

The real question on Rebecca Bunting's mind, however, was not of land, but of the position of the white minority in a Native South African Republic. She came right to the point. Who will guarantee equality for the whites in an independent Native Republic? Their slogan, as you know, is "Drive the whites into the sea." We listened to her in amazement and a laugh went through the audience.

The cat was finally let out of the bag, and a mangy, chauvinistic creature it was. Manuilsky stepped forward, his eyes twinkling. "Comrade Bunting has raised a serious question, one not to be sneezed at. What is to become of the whites? My answer to that would be that if the white Party members do not raise and energetically fight for an independent Native Republic, then *kto znaet?* (Who knows?) They may well be driven into the sea!" That brought the house down.[30]

The commission finally affirmed the resolution for a Native South African Republic. It was then passed onto the floor of the congress where the fight continued and our position was eventually accepted.[31]

THE REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT IN THE COLONIES

Upon the adjournment of the Negro Commission, many of us moved into the sessions of the Colonial Commission. We found there no peaceful, harmonious gathering, but acrimonious debate. Kuusinen's report and draft thesis on the Revolutionary Movement in the Colonies was under sharp attack. The point of controversy was the nature and objective of imperialist colonial policy.

The draft thesis held that the colonial policy of imperialism was directed toward "repressing and retarding" by all possible means the free economic and cultural development of the colonies and retaining them as backward, agrarian appendages of the imperialist metropolitan countries. This policy, the draft thesis maintained, is an essential condition for the super-exploitation of the colonial masses. Thus, it pointed out:

> The objective contradiction between the colonial policy of world imperialism and the independent development of the colonial peoples is by no means done away with, neither in China, nor in India, nor in any other of the colonial and semi-colonial countries; on the contrary, the contradiction only becomes more acute and can be overcome only by the victorious revolutionary struggle of the toiling masses in the colonies.[32]

Accordingly, the primary question for the colonies was their liberation.

The opponents of the draft thesis, on the other hand, took the view that imperialism had shifted its policy from one of hindering the economic development of the colonies to one of promoting industrialization under the joint auspices of the imperialists and native bourgeoisie. This was shown particularly in the more advanced colonies such as India and Indonesia, they argued.

It was the old social democratic theory of decolonization. It implied that the main contradiction between imperialism and the colonies was being eased; the colonial revolution was thereby being defused. The main components of that revolution, the national liberation struggle and the agrarian revolution, were being eliminated through industrialization. Thus, the perspective before the peoples of those colonies was not national liberation, but rather a long-range struggle for socialism.

I was amazed to find that leading the attack on the draft thesis was none other than our Comrade Petrovsky. He who had seemed to be such a stalwart warrior against the right on the Afro-American and South African question had now become the chief advocate of the blatantly rightist "decolonization theory." But that wasn't all. He had rallied behind him most of the British delegation in his attack upon the draft thesis. It was quite a scandal!

Here was the British Party, in the homeland of the world's greatest imperialist power, championing the idea that Britain was taking the lead in decolonizing her empire. The tragedy was that the British delegation seemed totally unaware of the chauvinist implication of their stance.

It became clear to us in the discussion that the British Party's position with regard to the colonies pre-dated the congress. This was merely the first occasion for its full airing. Petrovsky had been CI representative to Britain and had played no small role in the development of the "decolonization" theory.

The partisans of decolonization were utterly routed both in the commission and on the floor of the congress. Lozovsky, Remmele, Murphy, Manuilsky, Katayama and Kuusinen all took the floor in rebuttal. In an early session of the congress, Katayama pointed to the "criminal neglect" of the British Party with regard to Ireland and India in the past, and of the Dutch and American Parties with regard to the Philippines and Indonesia. "The mother countries must correct this inactivity on their part, and give every assistance to the revolutionary movement in these colonial countries," he said.

I was impressed by the speeches of Kuusinen and Murphy, the sole Britisher who really spoke out against the position taken by his delegation. Murphy accused his comrades of "presenting a Menshevik picture of the colonial problem and drawing ultra-leftist conclusions."

He assailed the contention that the British were out to decolonize India jointly with the native bourgeoisie. "The need of the hour in every colonial country," he continued, "is a strong independent Communist Party which understands how to expose the bourgeoisie and destroy their influence over the masses through the correct exploitation of the differences between them and win the masses in the numberless crises which precede the revolutionary overthrow of all counter-revolutionary forces."[33]

Kuusinen, a mild-mannered little man with a dry, rasping voice, took the floor for the concluding blast. His summary, as I remember it, was a two-hour long devastating attack on the "decolonizers." He compared their position with that of the notorious Austrian social-imperialist, Otto Renner, who had put forth the perspective of world industrialization under capitalism, postponing the world socialist revolution "till the proletariat will become the great majority even in the colonies." Kuusinen pointed out that such views "embellished the 'progressive' role of imperialism....as if the colonial world were to be decolonized and industrialized in a peaceful manner by imperialism itself."[34]

Kuusinen further contended that "the development of native capital is not being denied in the thesis." But rather than there being an equal partnership in exploitation between the colonial bourgeoisie and imperialism, "imperialism does in fact restrict the industrialization of the colonies, prevent the full development of the productive forces." It is under such conditions that the class interests of the national bourgeoisie "demand the industrialization of the country," and in as much as the national bourgeoisie stands up for its class interests, "for the economic independence of the country, for its liberation from the imperialist yoke, then it plays a certain progressive role, while imperialism plays a substantially reactionary role."[35]

It was a brilliant and definitive presentation, I thought. Slowly gathering up his papers, Kuusinen looked out over the audience. "Yes, comrades," he said, "industrial development *is* taking place in the colonies, but *very* slowly, comrades, *very* slowly. In fact, just as slowly as the bolshevization of the British Party Politburo under the leadership of Comrade Petrovsky."

He then picked up his papers and stepped down from the rostrum. A momentary silence followed, then an outburst of laughter and prolonged applause.[36]

PEPPER GETS HIS LUMPS

The struggle against the Lovestone-Pepper leadership faction sharpened as the congress progressed. Their position of overestimating the strength and stability of U.S. capitalism and of underestimating the radicalization of the workers came under sharp attack. Our opposition group (Bittelman, Foster, Dunne, Cannon and Johnstone) came down hard on Pepper, taking advantage of his growing unpopularity at the congress. The attack on the Lovestone-Pepper faction was supported by leading and influential members of other delegations: notably Lozovsky, president of the Red International of Labor Unions, Lominadze from the Russian Delegation and Hans Neumann from the German Communist Party.

It was a pleasure to see how they zeroed in on Pepper. At last, he was getting his well-deserved lumps.

Lozovsky began by criticizing the CC of the CPUSA for having "instigated opposition to the decision of the Fourth RILU Congress on the question of new unions." But the thrust of his attack was not on the position itself, but on the dishonesty of the U.S. Central Committee which, on its arrival in Moscow, claimed support for the RILU Congress decisions.

"Of course, every Central Committee has the right to declare its disagreement with decisions adopted by the RILU, but there must be the courage to declare this....You cannot change a negative attitude...into a positive one on the way from New York to Moscow."

Lozovsky reiterated earlier criticism of the Party leadership; its passivity in organizing the unorganized, its incorrect attitude toward Black workers and toward the AFL. Then he focused in on Pepper, blasting his articles in *The Communist* ("America and the Tactics of the CI: Certain Basic Questions of our Perspective," May 1928.)

"Comrade Pepper sees nothing but the power of American capitalism," he charged, "and discovering America anew although this discovery was made long ago, completely passed over those vital points in my articles on the eve of the Fourth RILU Congress."

Then, in a concluding salvo, Lozovsky accused Pepper of having "frequently lost his bearings in European affairs...Today, as you have been able to convince yourselves from his speech here, he is all at sea in American affairs. He could truly be named: the muddler of the two hemispheres."[37]

Lominadze also kept Pepper under constant attack during the congress, scoring some devastating blows. He called Pepper's speech "an advertisement for the power of American imperialism," and stated that if it were printed in the paper, it could be mistaken for a "speech of any of the candidates of the Republican and Democratic parties."[38] He then blasted Pepper's articles in *The Communist* which listed the obstacles to the growth of the Party. According to Pepper, Lomindaze said, "everything is hindering us, capitalists are hindering us by exploiting the workers, the existence of capitalism itself hinders us, and of perspectives there are none at all."[39]

As the historic congress was drawing to a close, Jack Johnstone read into the minutes for our opposition caucus a statement expressing our disagreement with the section concerning the United States in Bukharin's draft thesis.

Among many points made in this statement, the most important were that Bukharin failed to emphasize the instability of American imperialism and recognize the contradictions confronting it; he failed to condemn the opportunist errors in Afro-American work and did not "state clearly that the main danger in our Party is from the Right."[40]

This statement was signed by Dunne, Gomez, Johnstone, Siskind, Epstein and Bittelman; significant was the fact that Browder, Cannon and Foster did not sign.

Although he basically agreed with the statement and opposed Lovestone and Pepper, Browder continued to hold his position of not identifying himself fully with the opposition caucus. Cannon's reasons for not supporting the statement were unclear at the time, but within a few months, he had become the organizer and leader of the Trotskyist movement in the U.S. I feel Foster was, at the time, still assessing the political lines in the struggle against the right deviation—and for this reason did not sign the document.

CONCLUSION

The Sixth Congress called for a sharpened fight of the working class and the colonial masses against imperialism. It set the stage for an all-out war against the main obstacle to the left turn. The right accommodationists and their conciliators in all the parties of the CI—all provided ideological ammunition for this struggle. The correctness of these documents were verified by the events of the following decade—world economic crisis, the rise of fascism and the outbreak of World War II.

The war against the right got into full swing immediately following the congress. In the next few months the Lovestone-Pepper cohorts were to expand further their right opportunistic thesis of American exceptionalism, elements of which they were developing before and during the congress.

In substance, the theory held that while the third period of growing capitalist crisis and intensification of class struggles was valid for the rest of the world, it did not apply to the United States. In the U.S., capitalism was on the upgrade and the prospects were for an easing of the class struggle. An era of industrial expansion lay ahead.

The next few months were also to reveal Lovestone's ties with the international right conspiracy led by Bukharin. This conspiracy, which we had only suspected during the congress, was finally exposed at the November 1929 joint meeting of the Political Bureau and Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. From this point on, the conspiracy of the "Bloc of Rights and Trotskyites" went underground to plot the overthrow of socialism in the Soviet Union. In 1937, Bukharin was convicted as one of the main leaders of this treasonous conspiracy and was executed.[41]

One of the most positive and enduring contributions of the Sixth Congress was the program on the question of U.S. Blacks. It pointed out that all the objective conditions exist in the Black Belt South for a national revolutionary movement of Black people against American imperialism. It established the essentially agrarian-democratic character of the Black liberation movement there. Under conditions of modern imperialist oppression, it could fulfill itself only by the achievement of democratic land redivision and the right of self-determination for the Afro-American people in the Black Belt. Thus, the new line brought the issue of Black equality out of the realm of bourgeois humanitarianism. It was no longer the special property of philanthropists and professional uplifters who sought to strip the Black struggle of its revolutionary implications.

The new position grounded the issue of Black liberation firmly in the fight of the American people for full democratic rights and in the struggle of the working class for socialism. The struggle for equality is in and of itself a revolutionary question, because the special oppression of Black people is a main prop of imperialist domination over the entire working class and the masses of exploited American people. Therefore, Blacks and the working class as a whole are mutual allies.

The fight of Blacks for national liberation, quite apart from humanitarian considerations, must be supported as it is a special feature of the struggle for the emancipation of the whole American working class. It is the historic task of American labor, as it advances on the road toward socialism, to solve the problems of land and freedom which the bourgeois democratic revolution of the Civil War and Reconstruction left unfinished.

The slogan of self-determination is a slogan of unity. Its overriding purpose was and still is to unite the white and Black exploited masses, working and oppressed people of all nationalities, in all three stages of the revolutionary movement: from the day-to-day fight against capital, through the revolutionary battle for state power, to the task of building and consolidating socialist society. The new line clearly stated that this unity could be built only on the basis of the struggle for complete equality, by removing all grounds for suspicion and distrust and building mutual confidence and voluntary inter-relations between the white masses of the oppressor nation and the Black masses of the oppressed nation.

This line committed the Communist Party to an uncompromising fight among its members and in the ranks of labor generally to burn out the root of the ruling class theories of white chauvinism which depicts Blacks as innately inferior. The mobilization of the white workers in the struggle for Black rights is a precondition for freeing the Black workers from the stifling influences of petty bourgeois nationalism with its ideology of self-isolation. Only thus, the program pointed out, can the historic rift in the ranks of American labor be breached and a solid front of white and Black workers be presented to the common enemy, American imperialism.

Of course, weaknesses were inevitable in this first resolution. The document was open to the interpretation that the emerging Black nation was limited only to the territory of absolute majority and that the slogan of right of self-determination was primarily dependent on the continued existence of an area of absolute Black majority.

The document should have made clear that one cannot hold absolutely to the national territorial principle in the application of the right of self-determination.[42] The very nature of imperialism attacks and deforms the characteristics of nationhood. Imperialism has, to a large extent, driven Afro-American people from the rural areas to the cities of the north and South.

Another weakness was the underestimation of the nationality factor in the struggle for equality and democratic rights in the north. Thus, the program failed to advance any slogans for local autonomy which would guarantee and protect the rights of Blacks in the north. The need for such a program has been most clearly demonstrated in recent years by the growth and development of the movement for community control of the schools and police in northern cities.

But on the whole, the resolution was a strong one. Its significance was that it drew a clear line between the revolutionary and the reformist positions—between the line of effective struggle and futile accommodation.

The document was not a complete and definite statement, but a new departure, a revolutionary turning point in the treatment of the Afro-American question.

Chapter 10

Lovestone Unmasked

Otto, Harold Williams and Farmer, having completed their course at KUTVA, left the Soviet Union after the Sixth Congress. The African, Bankole, remained for further training to prepare him for work in the Gold Coast (Ghana). At KUTVA there was another contingent of Black students from the U.S. Along with Maude White, there were now William S. Patterson (Wilson), Herbert Newton, Marie Houston and many more were to come.

I was then thirty and had recently completed my last YCL assignment as a delegate to the Fifth Congress of the Young Communist International (YCI). Along with my studies at the Lenin School, I was continuing my work in the Comintern. I was then vice-chairman of the Negro Subcommission of the Eastern (colonial) Secretariat, and Nasanov was chairman. The subcommission was established as a "watch-dog" committee to check on the application of the Sixth Congress decisions with reference to the Black national question in the U.S. and South Africa. According to our reports, the South Africans were applying the line of the Sixth Congress and so we devoted most of our attention to the work in the United States.

In the U.S., the minority girded itself for a long struggle against the Lovestone-Pepper leadership, which had emerged from the Sixth Congress battered, but not beaten. This leadership still enjoyed the majority support within the Party. This was due primarily to the widely prevalent belief within the Party that this leadership was favored by the Comintern. Lovestone was loud in his protestations of support for the line of the Sixth Congress and attempted to pin the right-wing label on the minority. This deception was successful for a short time.

The CI's support for Lovestone seemed confirmed by a letter from the ECCI dated September 7, 1928, a week after the adjournment of the Sixth Congress. The letter contained two documents. The first was the final draft of paragraph forty-nine of the "Thesis on the International Situation and Tasks of the Communist International," which dealt with the U.S. Party. The second was a "Supplementary Decision" by the Political Secretariat of the Executive Committee of the Communist International which denied the minority's charge that the Lovestone-Pepper leadership represented a right line in the Party.[1]

Paragraph forty-nine commended the Party, saying, "it has displayed more lively activity and has taken advantage of symptoms of crisis in American industry....A number of stubborn and fierce class battles (primarily the miners' strike) found in the Communist Party a stalwart leader. The campaign against the execution of Sacco and Vanzetti was also conducted under the leadership of the Party."

It also criticized the Party, stating that "the Party has not with sufficient energy conducted work in the organization of the unorganized and of the Negro Movement, and...it does not conduct a sufficiently strong struggle against the predatory policy of the United States in Latin America." It concluded by stating, "These mistakes, however, cannot be ascribed to the majority leadership alone....the most important task that confronts the Party is to put an end to the factional strife which is not based on any serious differences on principles..." The thesis pointed out that while some rightist errors had been committed by both sides, "the charge against the majority of the Central Committee of the U.S. Party of representing a right line is unfounded."

The letter evoked great jubilation among Lovestone-Pepper cohorts and was given widest publicity. A self-laudatory statement from the Central Committee was published alongside the CI letter in the October 3, 1928, *Daily Worker.* It boasted that the letter proved that the CI "is continuing its policy of supporting politically the present Party leadership."

Of course we in the minority resented Lovestone's interpretation of the CI's letter. We felt that the CI's criticisms of all factionalism and its rejection of our specific charge against the Lovestone-Pepper leadership were not equivalent to a political endorsement for Lovestone. The Comintern called for unity in the Party on the basis of the Sixth Congress's decisions. We could hardly expect the CI to come out in support of the minority; it was not a cohesive ideological force itself. The subsequent defection of Cannon to Trotskyism further demonstrated the lack of ideological cohesion in the minority. Then there was the hard fact that Lovestone still held the majority of the U.S. Party.

Differences of principle between the minority and the Lovestone leadership had begun to develop only a half year before at the Fourth Congress of the RILU in March 1928. These arose over the question of trade unions; but even here they were clouded by factionalism and vacillation on the part of the minority. There was, therefore, substance to the CI's charges that both groups had placed factional consideration above principles.

About the same time, the Party was shocked by the defection of James Cannon and his close associates Max Shachtman and Marty Abern. They were exposed as hidden Trotskyists and expelled from the Party. Cannon's treachery was first exposed by the minority. This frustrated Lovestone's attempt to pin the label of Trotskyism on our group. Nevertheless, Lovestone sought to use the Trotsky issue to divert the Party from the struggle against the main right danger. Later, the Comintern was to criticize the minority for its lack of vigilance and its failure to disassociate itself "at the right time" from Cannon's Trotskyism.

Lovestone was cocky and over-confident. He was looking forward to wiping out the minority as a political force in the U.S. Party at the next convention. Even the recall to Moscow of Pepper, his main advisor and co-factionalist, shortly after the return of the U.S. delegation, seemed not to shake his self-confidence. (Pepper had originally come to the U.S. as a Comintern worker and was thus directly subject to its discipline.)

His recall was undoubtedly an indication of Lovestone's declining support within the Comintern. The Lovestone leadership supported Pepper's protest against recall. The CI did not press the issue at the time and Pepper remained in the U.S. Shortly thereafter he returned to his former position in Party leadership. But the incident was not forgotten; it was to be added on the debit side of the ledger at Lovestone's final accounting.

Then came the first blow. It was a letter from the Political Secretariat dated November 21, 1928. The letter expressed sharp displeasure at the factional manner in which Lovestone had used the previous letter of September 7. It pointed to the non-self-critical and self-congratulatory character of the statements issued by the majority in response to the September letter and expressed emphatic disapproval of the claim by Lovestone that the Comintern was "continuing its policy of supporting politically the present leadership." "This formulation," the new letter asserted, "could lead to the interpretation that the Sixth Congress has expressly declared its confidence in the majority in contrast to the minority. But this is not so."[2]

The letter also called for the postponement of the Party Convention until February 1929. Clearly Lovestone had overreached himself. Coming on the eve of the U.S. Central Committee Plenum, the letter threw the Lovestoneites into dismay and consternation. How do we explain the sharpened tone of this letter? It was a by-product of the heightened counter-offensive against the international right and its conciliators which had gotten underway after the Sixth Congress of the Comintern. It was a warning tremor of the quake that was to come.

Internationally the right had crystallized at the congress and, immediately following, it had burgeoned forth in the USSR and other leading parties of the Comintern. In Germany it was expressed in illusions regarding the social democrats and in resistance to the organization of left unions. In France it was reflected in opposition to the election slogan of "class against class." In Britain it surfaced as a non-critical attitude towards the Labor Party and a refusal to put up independent candidates.

This new thrust of the right was met by a strong counter-offensive. In Germany it led to the expulsion of the Brandler-Thaelheimer right liquidationists. The CI intervened there on behalf of Thaelmann against the conciliators Ewart and Gerhart Eisler.

In the Soviet Union, the right line of Bukharin and his friends had encouraged resistance on the part of the *kulaks* and capitalist elements to the five-year plan, industrialization and collectivization. They resisted the state monopoly on foreign trade. This was reflected in mass sabotage, terrorism against collective farmers, party workers and governmental officials in the countryside, burning down of the collective farms and state granaries. In the same year (1928), a widespread conspiracy of wreckers was exposed in the Shackty District of the Donetz Coal Basin. The conspirators had close connections with former mine owners and foreign capitalists. Their aim was to disrupt socialist development. As a result, the counter-offensive could no longer be postponed, and the CPSU was obliged to take sharp action against the menacing right and its leaders—Bukharin, Rykov and Tomsky.

The opening gun against the right came in October 1928, at a plenary meeting of the Moscow Committee of the CPSU. At first, Bukharin was not mentioned by name. Other meetings followed. In early February 1929, at a joint meeting of the Politburo and Presidium of the Central Control Commission (CCC), Bukharin was exposed as a leader of the hidden right.

In the Comintern itself, the struggle unfolded after the Sixth Congress. As Bukharin came under attack, his leadership became increasingly tenuous. De facto leadership of the CI passed to the pro-Stalin forces and Bukharin became little more than a figurehead. His lieutenants, the Swiss Humbert-Droz and the Italian Celler, also came under attack.

Against this background, it was inevitable that Lovestone too, would be smoked out in the open.

We students held what amounted to a dual-party membership—enabling us to keep abreast of the situation in both the CPSU and the CPUSA. From our vantage point in Moscow, we had a clearer view of the developments in the CI than did our counterparts at home. As members of the CPSU we participated in the fight of the school against the right. Molotov himself, Stalin's closest aide, came to the school to report on the decisions of the February 1929, joint meeting of the Central Commission of the CC of the CPSU and the Moscow Party organization. Along with Bukharin, Rykov and Tomsky were exposed as leaders of a clandestine right in the Soviet Party.

Molotov had moved into the CI immediately after the Sixth Congress—a clear political move to offset Bukharin's leadership. Therefore, he spoke authoritatively on the ramifications of the international right and of Bukharin supporters in the fraternal German, French, Italian and other parties. He didn't mention the CPUSA or Lovestone in his report, but we students did in discussion on the floor following his report.

The Lenin School was a strong point in the struggle against the Bukharin right, just as it had been in the struggle against the Trotsky-Zinoviev left. The school reflected in microcosm the struggle raging throughout the CI for the implementation of the Sixth Congress line against the right opposition. Here we had the right on the run. They were in the minority and at a decided disadvantage from the start, for the entire school administration and faculty from Kursanova (the director) down were stalwart supporters of the Central Committee of the CPSU and its majority grouped around Stalin.

Indeed, Lovestone had made a fatal mistake in allowing so many able comrades of the minority in the CPUSA to go to the Lenin School. He had undoubtedly already realized this. My group was now in its second year. The students who had preceded us, including Hathaway, were back in the U.S. and Hathaway quickly became an outstanding leader of the minority group upon his return.

We all had many friends in the Russian Party and in the CI, especially among the second level leadership—people important in international work. Some of us were sent on brief international missions—for example, the Krumbeins were sent to China and also to Britain. Rudy Baker, another student from the U.S., was also sent to China. A number of us American students were invited to participate in meetings of the Profintern, the Anglo-American

Secretariat and even the ECCI itself on occasions where American questions were discussed.

I remember one such meeting that I attended as part of a group from the Lenin School. I had been sent by the school to extend greetings to a joint meeting of the Central Control Commission of the CC of the CPSU and its Moscow organization held January-February 1929, as mentioned above. Although I felt no need for an interpreter, as my Russian was adequate, Gus Sklar was sent with me. He was a fellow student and one of the few supporters of Lovestone at the school. A Russian-American, he was completely bilingual and a very affable fellow.

In my brief speech of greetings I hailed the victorious struggle of the CPSU against the right and right-conciliators under the leadership of Comrade Stalin as setting an example for us in the American Party. "We have our own right deviationists," I said, "Bukharin's friends in the American Party—the Pepper-Lovestone leadership." I described the leadership's theory of American exceptionalism and its underestimation of the radicalization of the American working class and oppressed Blacks. I ended my speech in a typical Russian manner: "Long live the CPSU and its Bolshevik Central Committee led by Comrade Stalin."

I listened attentively as poor old Gus honestly and accurately translated my speech. It certainly was a factional speech but was greeted with applause by the Moscow officials and workers in the audience.

Gus left the hall and proceeded immediately to the Lux Hotel to inform Lovestone's crony, Bertram Wolfe. Wolfe had recently replaced J. Louis Engdahl as U.S. representative to the CI. He had been sent by Lovestone in the hope of improving communication between Moscow and the American Party.

I recall that he was particularly riled by this speech. Several days later there was a meeting of the ECCI on the preparations for the American Party's Sixth Convention to which a number of us students were invited as usual. Wolfe, while giving his report, voiced a number of complaints. Citing my speech, he questioned the seeming lack of respect accorded the legitimate representative of the American Party. "How is it," he wondered, "that Haywood, a mere student, extends greetings to the Soviet Party. Why is it that he is given a platform at such an important meeting to launch a factional attack on the U.S. Communist Party? Why is it that when I report here, Lenin School students are always called on to give minority reports?"

These complaints were met with stony-faced silence by the members of the secretariat.

CURTAINS FOR LOVESTONE

From Moscow, we students followed events in the U.S. with avid interest. Our line of communication was in good repair, as our stateside friends kept us well posted. We knew a showdown was imminent. Finally, the Sixth Convention of the CPUSA convened on March 1, 1929.

It was attended by two special CI emissaries with plenipotentiary powers, the German, Philip Dengel, and the British Communist leader, Harry Pollitt. They brought with them two sets of directives: the first was public in the form of the final draft of the CI's open letter to the convention, and the second, confidential organizational proposals designed to ensure the carrying out of the directives of the open letter. The contents of the open letter were known; it had been circulated as a draft. We students at the Lenin School had participated in the discussions in the CI in which the letter was formulated.

The open letter continued the balanced criticism of both groups along the lines of paragraph forty-nine of the Thesis of the Sixth Congress and the Supplementary Thesis. It held that both groups were guilty of unprincipled factionalism; it pointed to the absence of differences on principle between them. It said both were guilty of right mistakes. However, there was something new in the open letter. It pointed out that the source of the right mistakes of both groups lay in the idea of American exceptionalism. "Both sides," it continued, "are inclined to regard American imperialism as isolated from world capitalism. as independent from it and developing according to its own laws."[3]

To us in the minority, it seemed the scales were now tipped slightly but definitely against Lovestone. Though both sides were guilty of this error, it was the Lovestone faction which had articulated it into a full blown theory and which, I felt, held to it the most strongly.

"This mistake of the majority is closely related to its great overestimation of the economic might and the powerful technical development of the United States." In this regard the open letter emphasized that it is "absolutely wrong to regard this technical revolution as a 'second industrial revolution' as is done in the majority thesis." It was a "serious error," it stated, to infer that the remnants of feudalism were being wiped out in the South and that a new bourgeoisie with a new proletariat were being formed.

"Such overestimation (of the results of the development of technique) would play into the hands of all advertisers of the successes of bourgeois science and technique who seek to deafen the proletariat by raising a lot of noise about technical progress and showing that there is no general crisis of capitalism; that capitalism is still vigorous in the U.S. and that thanks to its extremely rapid development, it is capable of pulling Europe out of its crisis." The letter contended that "technical transformation" and rationalization lead "to further deepening and sharpening of the general crisis of capitalism."

With regards to the minority it criticized Bittelman's "apex theory " and stated that the "sharpening of the general crisis of capitalism is to be expected not because American imperialism ceases to develop but on the contrary it is to be expected because American imperialism is developing and surpasses other capitalist countries in its development, which leads to an extreme accentuation of all antagonisms." The "apex theory" is the view that U.S. imperialism had reached its peak of development and would soon be brought to its knees, primarily by the weight of its own internal contradictions.

The letter went on to condemn the factionalism in the Party, stating, "so long as these two groups exist in the Party...the further healthy ideological development of the Party is excluded."

It concluded by putting forth four principal conditions essential to the Party's "transformation into a mass Communist Party...the decisive significance of which neither the majority...nor the minority have understood." The four conditions were: "1) A correct perspective in the analysis of the general crisis of capitalism and American imperialism which is a part of it; 2) To place in the center of the work of the Party the daily needs of the American working class; 3) Freeing the Party from its immigrant narrowness and seclusion and making the American workers its wide basis, paying due attention to work among Negroes; and 4) Liquidation of factionalism and drawing workers into the leadership."

Clearly the letter put an end to any basis for Lovestone's claim of CI support.

What then were the CI's proposals for a new, non-factional leadership? These were contained in the confidential organizational proposals brought by the two CI reps, Dengel and Pollitt. The proposals called for the temporary withdrawal of Lovestone and Bittelman—considered the two main factionalists—from the U.S. and requested that they be placed at the disposal of the CI for assignment to international work. It advised the appointment of William Z. Foster as the new general secretary. Pepper was again ordered to Moscow immediately and forbidden to attend the convention.

Formal acceptance of the line of the open letter posed no difficulties for an unprincipled opportunist of Lovestone's caliber. In fact, the letter was endorsed by both factions. But the organizational proposals, which threatened to snatch power from Lovestone, were another matter. The crucial question for Lovestone and company was to retain contol of the Party. With his huge majority in the Party, he felt he was in a position to bargain with the CI. But the situation called for some fast footwork.

While loudly proclaiming full agreement with the political directive and proposing its unqualified acceptance, he directed his main thrust at the organizational proposals, claiming they contradicted the political directive. Defying the CI reps, he and his partisans carried the fight to the convention floor. There they launched an unbridled campaign of defamation and character assassination against Foster, who was then favored by the CI to replace Lovestone. The minority, on its part, charged Lovestone with support of the deposed Bukharin.

Not to be outdone, the Lovestoneites supported a resolution denouncing Bukharin and calling for his ouster as head of the Comintern. Lovestone had no compunction in dumping his former political patron.

Tempers flared; fistfights erupted on the convention floor. A group of so-called proletarian delegates organized by Lovestone sent a cable to the CI pleading for a reversal of the organizational proposals, and that the convention be allowed to choose its own general secretary, subject of course to the CI's approval.

The situation was so tense that the CI responded by conceding the right of the convention to elect its own leadership—and thus its general secretary—with the exception of Lovestone. They still insisted on Lovestone's and Bittelman's withdrawal to Moscow. Other than that, the convention with its Lovestone majority was free to elect its own leadership.

Lovestone made his crony Gitlow general secretary. The CI also insisted on Pepper's return to Moscow. The convention ended up with the appointment of several Lovestone loyalists as a "proletarian delegation," which would travel to Moscow and plead the majority case in the Comintern. The members of the delegation were mainly Party functionaries chosen for political reliability. Led by the majority leaders Lovestone, Gitlow and Bedacht, they went to Moscow to seek the repeal of Lovestone's assignment to Moscow and his prohibition from CPUSA leadership.

THE SCENE SHIFTS TO MOSCOW

Since the Sixth Congress, Lovestone had succeeded in covering his flanks on the Afro-American question. He had proposed Huiswood as candidate for the ECCI (of which he was now a member). Five Blacks—Huiswood, Otto Hall, Briggs, Edward Welsh and John Henry—were elected to the new Central Committee. Lovestone's "proletarian delegation" arrived in Moscow on April 7, 1929, its ten members included two Black comrades, Edward Welsh and Otto Huiswood. I assumed that the line-up of leading Black comrades with the Lovestone crowd represented an alliance of convenience and had little to do with ideology. Up to that time there had been no serious discussion in the Party of the Sixth Congress resolution on the Negro question.

Foster and Weinstone also arrived to place the case of the minority before the American Commission. Weinstone had switched over to the minority during the Sixth Party Convention and now supported the CI organizational proposals. Bittelman was also on hand, having acceded without protest to his reassignment to Comintern work.

The American Commission convened a week later, on April 14, 1929, in a large rectangular hall in the Comintern building. More than a hundred participants and spectators were on hand. The commission itself was an impressive group and included leading Marxists from Germany, Britain, France, Czechoslovakia and China. Among the delegates from the USSR were Stalin, Molotov and Manuilsky. There were also top officials of the Comintern and Profintern: Kuusinen, Gusev, Mikhailov (Williams), Lozovsky, Béla Kun, Kolarov, Kitarov (secretary of the YCI) and Bell. Kuusinen was chairman of the commission and Mikhailov was secretary.

Among the invited guests was our large contingent from the Lenin School. I sat and looked over the "proletarian delegation" as we waited for the meeting to start.[4] I knew Huiswood, having met him at the founding convention of the American Negro Labor Congress in 1925, but I didn't know Welsh—he was a newcomer, having been in the Party only a few months.

There was Alex Noral, a farmer from the west coast whom I had met in Moscow the year before. There he had worked in the Crestintern (the Peasant International) representing American farmers. There was Mother Bloor whom I had met previously; she was a plump, kindly-looking elderly woman, formerly with the Foster faction. She always had a twinkle in her eye and her gentle look belied her true character as a staunch, fierce, proletarian fighter. A veteran of many labor battles, she was an impressive agitator. I wondered what she was doing in Lovestone's crowd. There were three others in the delegation whom I didn't know: William Miller, Tom Myerscough and William J. White.

The commission sessions were to last nearly a month. Gitlow led off stating the case for the majority. A large man, his face screwed up in a perennial frown, he was an ill-tempered sort. He harangued the audience for two hours, pouring invective on the minority, particularly Foster. Boasting that the overwhelming majority of the Party supported his group, he praised Lovestone, contrasting the great (so-called) "contributions" of Lovestone with the shortcomings and failures of Foster.

Woven throughout was the implication that the Party would be destroyed if the Comintern's decisions were not reversed. He attacked Lozovsky, Profintern chairman, as being virtually a member of the minority faction. He wound up his pitch by calling for a reversal of the CI organizational directives to the CPUSA Sixth Convention, stating that the removal of Lovestone from leadership would be a damaging blow to the Party.

Foster replied in a more moderate tone, scoring the Pepper-Lovestone leadership and their theory of American exceptionalism as representing the right deviation in the U.S. Party. He expressed outrage at the smear campaign launched against him by the Lovestone group which he said was designed to line up the Party against the CI decisions. He called for support of the Comintern.

Bittelman spoke, emphasizing that the downward swing of the U.S. economy was already taking place and life itself refuted the Lovestone-Pepper optimistic prognosis. Wolfe complained about discriminatory treatment by the ECCI; how his status as official representative of the CPUSA was not recognized and how he was excluded from important discussions on the American question.

At last, members of the "proletarian delegation" took the floor and spoke, damning Foster and praising Lovestone. After speaking, each one was questioned by members of the commission. The questions were designed to bring out their understanding of the issues involved. Nothing came out but a parroting of Gitlow and Lovestone.

There was an undercurrent of belligerency and hostility to the commission and the Comintern. Loyalty to Lovestone was a hallmark of the delegation. I was particularly embarrassed by Ed Welsh. He was a tall, handsome, young Black. Welsh, I learned, had been in the Party only a few months, but was a staunch henchman of Lovestone, who had placed him on the Central Committee.

As he mounted the platform, anger, defiance and disrespect for the commission was written plainly on his face. He launched into a most vicious tirade against Lozovsky, the chairman of the Profintern. Manuilsky, a Soviet member of the ECCI who was sitting in front of the rostrum, was so shocked at the virulence of this attack against a person of Lozovsky's stature that he started to rise to his feet in protest.

Welsh waved him down with his hand, shouting, "Aw, sit down, you!"

Manuilsky flopped back in his chair in open-mouth amazement.

Tom Myerscough, a mine organizer from the Pittsburgh area, also spoke. He was a tough-looking, blustering ex-miner. He strode up to the platform and declared that he spoke three languages, "English, profane, and today I'm gonna speak cold turkey."

The running translation came to an abrupt halt and there was a momentary confusion as the translators stumbled over this slang term.

In the end, Myerscough's "cold turkey" turned out to be just another rehash of Lovestone's charges.

The commission then brought up its big guns. Comintern and Profintern officials—Gusev, Kolarov, Lozovsky, Béla Kun, Heller and Bell. They continued with a balanced criticism of both groups, but as the meeting went on more and more emphasis was placed on the mistakes of the majority.

Lozovsky, his eyes twinkling, stepped up joyously to the attack. It was evident that he welcomed this opportunity to settle old scores. He'd been subject to insults and slanders from Lovestone and company for several years, and now the day of reckoning had come. He directed his main barbs against Lovestone and Pepper, dwelling at length on the "strange case" of Comrade Pepper and his fictitious travels.

Pepper was first called back to Moscow in September 1928; the call was repeated in the organizational proposals of February 1929, and he was ordered to take no part in the U.S. Party convention. Pepper dropped out of sight, giving the impression that he was on his way back to Moscow. Pepper's account of what then happened was that he went to Mexico to seek transportation by ship to the Soviet Union. When no satisfactory arrangements could be made, he returned to New York and from there went on to Moscow. But during the period he was supposedly in Mexico, he was seen in New York at the time of the Party convention there.

Pepper had returned, we heard, but was not present at any of the sessions. His case was before the International Control Commission. (An arm of the CI, the ICC was composed of representatives of seventeen parties. Its functions were to supervise the finances of the ECCI and deal with questions of discipline referred to it by member parties.)

Lozovsky dwelt at length on Pepper's mysterious travels; how it was the longest trip on record from New York to Moscow, how he had somehow managed the impossible feat of being in two places at the same time. He spoke of how Pepper had faced a big decision: either to return to Moscow or remain in the United States—which meant dropping out of the Party. It took him a long while to make up his mind, Lozovsky observed.

Kolarov, a huge Bulgarian, took the floor. He referred to Myerscough's "cold turkey" speech with heavy humor. He conceded that he lacked the linguistic skills of some of his American comrades, and since he didn't know anything about this "cold turkey," he was just going to speak plain Russian.

Stalin made his first speech at the commission on May 6. Foster had introduced me to him at the beginning of the commission sessions. I guess Foster had wanted him to know he also had some Black supporters. I had met Stalin before, but I doubt that the great man had remembered me from our first meeting.

I was now to hear him speak for the first time. Garbed in his customary tan tunic and polished black boots, he stepped to the rostrum. Very informally leaning on the stand with a pipe in one hand, he began speaking in a calm, measured, scarcely audible voice. We had to strain to hear him.

Stalin emphasized two main points, charging both the majority and minority factions with American exceptionalism and unprincipled factionalism: "Both groups are guilty of the fundamental error of exaggerating the specific features of American capitalism. You know that this exaggeration lies at the root of every opportunist error committed both by the majority and minority groups."[5] Stalin followed this with a rhetorical question: "What are the main defects in the practice of the leaders of the majority and the minority?...Firstly, that in their day-to-day work they, and particularly the leaders of the majority, are guided by motives of unprincipled factionalism and place the interests of their faction higher than the interests of the Party.

"Secondly, that both groups, and particularly the majority, are so infected with the disease of factionalism that they base their relations with the Comintern, not on the principle of confidence, but on a policy of rotten diplomacy, a policy of diplomatic intrigue." As an example he cited the way in which both factions speculated on the "existing and non-existing differences within the CPSU," adding that they are "competing with each other and chasing after each other like horses in a race."[6]

He presented a six-point program for a solution to the problems faced by the American Party. This included approval "in the main" of the ECCI proposals to the Sixth Convention of the CPUSA (except that relating to the candidacy of Foster); sending of an open letter to all Party members "emphasizing the question of eradicating all factionalism"; condemning the refusal of the majority leaders to carry out the ECCI proposals at the Party convention; ending immediately the situation in the American Party in which important questions of developing the mass movement, "questions of the struggle of the working class against the capitalists," were "replaced by petty questions of the factional struggle."

Stalin concluded by calling for a reorganization of the CPUSA by the secretariat of the ECCI, with emphasis on advancing those workers "who are capable of placing the interests and the unity of the Party above the interests of individual groups." Finally, that Lovestone and Bittelman be made available for work in the Comintern so that everyone clearly understands that "the Comintern intends to fight factionalism in all seriousness."[7]

Stalin's remarks indicated why the CI considered the development of the American Party so crucial and why it spent so much time in resolving its problems: "The American Communist Party is one of those few communist parties in the world upon which history has laid tasks of a decisive character from the point of view of the world revolutionary movement....The three million new unemployed in America are the first swallows indicating the ripening of the economic crisis in America...I think the moment is not far off when a revolutionary crisis will develop in America."[8]

As Stalin was speaking, I looked across and saw Lovestone with a leer on his face. Earlier on during a break in the session, I had run into him in the corridor.

"Hello, Harry," he called to me, "you ought to come over to our side; we could use a bright young fellow like you."

Rather taken aback at the man's gall, I said something like, "You've got your own Negroes!"

"Oh, that trash!" he said with a deprecating wave of his hand, obviously referring to Huiswood and Welsh.

Shocked by his crudeness, I was strongly tempted to ask how much he thought I was worth, but I was afraid he might have taken me seriously.

The session continued as Molotov followed Stalin, speaking along basically the same line. He stressed the need to put an end to the factionalism which had corroded the Party and held back the growth of the working class movement. He concluded by calling on the CPUSA to "get on a new track....to ensure the liquidation of factionalism not in words but in deeds, and to ensure the transformation of its organization" so that the Party could prepare itself for the sharpening struggles and crises to come.[9]

It was now clear from the speeches of Stalin, Molotov and other members of the commission which way the wind was blowing. For the majority, Stalin's speech was definitely an ill omen. Even though the subcommittee of the commission (Molotov, Gusev and Kuusinen) had not yet reported out a draft of the commission's findings, Lovestone and company decided to force a showdown. From this point on, they began a series of veiled threats against the Comintern.

On May 9, three days before the subcommittee's draft was presented, the Lovestoneites issued a declaration which accused the ECCI of supporting the minority against the majority and "rewarding Comrade Foster with its confidence." Gambling that they would still be able to control the Party at home, the Lovestoneites arrogantly challenged the leadership of the CI. As a cover for their own splitting activities, they accused the ECCI of trying to split the American Party.[10]

This was clearly the rhetoric of splitting, and was so considered by the members of the commission. It could only be interpreted as a threat to take the U.S. Party out of the CI.

On May 12, the last meeting of the full commission was called into session. Kuusinen, as chairman, reported the findings and decisions of the subcommittee. Their report was in the form of a draft address from the ECCI to the membership of the CPUSA which had been circulated the day before.[11] Addressed over the heads of the Party leadership, it singled out the Lovestone faction for its sharpest attack. In this respect, it went much beyond previous criticisms, such as those of the "Open Letter to the Sixth Convention." It now said that exceptionalism was "the ideological lever of the right errors in the American Communist Party," adding that exceptionalism:

> found its clearest exponents in the persons of Comrades Pepper and Lovestone, whose conception was as follows: There is a crisis of capitalism but not of American capitalism, a swing of the masses leftwards but not in America. There is the necessity of accentuating the struggle against reformism but not in the United States, there is a necessity for struggling against the right danger, but not in the American Communist Party.

The address charged the Lovestone leadership with "misleading honest proletarian Party members who uphold the line of the

Comintern," and "playing an unprincipled game with the question of the struggle against the right danger." It termed Lovestone's declaration of May 9 to be a "most factional and entirely impermissible anti-Party declaration," stating that it "represents a direct attempt at preparing a condition necessary for paralyzing the decisions of the Comintern and for a split in the Communist Party of America."

The draft address concluded with five points:

1) A call for dissolution of both factions;
2) Temporary removal of Lovestone and Bittelman from work in the CPUSA;
3) Rejection of the minority demand for a special convention;
4) A call for the re-organization of the secretariat of the CC of the CPUSA on a non-factional basis;
5) The turning of Pepper's case over to the International Control Commission.

Presenting the draft address, Kuusinen appealed to the Lovestone delegation:

> We call upon the comrades to turn back from this road unconditionally....Our subcommission deems it necessary to call quite definitely upon the delegation as a whole, and upon every individual member of the delegation, to state with absolute clearness whether they are prepared to submit to the decisions of the Comintern on the American question and to carry them out implicitly without reservations. Yes or no? It will substantially depend upon your answer, what character the measures of the Comintern upon the American question shall eventually assume. From your declaration we see plainly that it is no longer a question of factionalism of the leaders of the Majority of the CC against the Minority group, but it is already a factional attitude towards the Executive of the Comintern.[12]

The majority delegates, after provoking this showdown with the ECCI, refused to give a straight answer to the question posed by Kuusinen—whether or not they would accept the decisions of the Comintern. They backed away, postponing a confrontation until May 14. In the meantime, the majority leaders were secretly taking steps to split the Party.

A cable drafted immediately after the May 12 meeting and telegraphed from Berlin on May 15 was secretly sent to "caretakers" at home, instructing them that the "....draft decision means destruction of Party....take no action, any proposals by anybody." The cable went on to state, "situation astounding, outrageous, can't be understood until arrival" and "possibility entire delegation being forcibly detained."

The cable then instructed the majority cohorts at home to: "Start wide movements in units and press for return of complete delegation...take no action on any...CI instructions....Carefully check up all units, all property, all connections, all mailing lists of auxiliaries, all sub-lists, district lists, removing some offices and unreliables. Check all checking accounts, all organizations, seeing that authorized signers are exclusively reliables, appointing secretariat for auxiliaries and treasury dis-authorize present signatory. Instantly finish preparations sell buildings especially eliminating (Weinstone) trusteeship. Remove Mania Reiss."[13]

LOVESTONE'S MOMENT OF TRUTH

May 14, the night of the big showdown, finally arrived. The Presidium of the ECCI—the highest body of the Comintern—convened to hear the report of the commission and render the final decision on the American question. The Red Hall of the Comintern building was jam-packed with participants and on-lookers, among them top flight leaders of the Comintern and Profintern, political workers of both these organizations and leaders of many affiliate parties.

We Americans constituted a sizeable group. In addition to the ten delegates, it seemed as though Moscow's entire American Communist colony was present. Aside from our large Lenin School contingent, which had attended the sessions from the beginning, there were now students from the Eastern University (KUTVA): Maude White, Patterson, Marie Houston, Bennett and Herbert Newton.

Lovestone's moment of truth had arrived. During the month of sessions, tension had been steadily building; we waited with eager anticipation for the outcome of the final session.

Finally the meeting was gaveled to order and Kuusinen, the chairman of the commission read its findings. They were in the form of an address from the Executive Committee of the Comintern to all members of the Communist Party USA. He concluded by pointing out that the majority delegates had yet to answer the question he had posed in the commission on the twelfth of the month. The floor was then thrown open for discussion.

An angry, scowling Ben Gitlow mounted the platform and read another declaration signed by the American "proletarian" delegation. Although presented in a more diplomatic form than the previous declaration, this new statement continued the same factional and anti-Party attack. As later characterized by the ECCI, it was a "direct attempt to nullify the decisions of the CI and pave the way for an open split in the CPUSA."[14]

The declaration opened with some formal phrases asserting the adherence of its signers to discipline, loyalty and devotion to the Comintern, and claiming to speak for the "overwhelming majority of the membership" of the Party.

It went on to charge the new draft letter to be

> Contrary to the letter and spirit of the line of the Sixth (Comintern) Congress...our acceptance of this draft letter would only promote demoralization, disintegration and chaos in the Party. This is the only logical outcome of the line of the draft letter....There are valid reasons for our being unable to accept this new draft letter, to assume responsibility before the Party membership for the execution of this letter, to endorse the inevitable irreparable damage that the line of this new draft letter is bound to bring to our Party."[15]

The audience sat in stunned silence at this outright defiance of the Comintern. It was a clear declaration of war.

Following Gitlow's tirade, members of the Presidium and leaders of other parties took the floor and attacked the declaration, pointing out its anti-Party splitting character. They pleaded with the rank-and-file members of the delegation to remain loyal to the Comintern. This plea was joined by a number of our Lenin

School students; Zack, Cowl and Lena Davis all spoke.

During this part of the discussion, Stalin took the floor for the second time. In his usual calm, deliberate manner he delivered a scathing blast at the majority leaders—Lovestone, Gitlow and Bedacht. He characterized the May 9 declaration as "super-factional" and "anti-Party." The May 14 declaration was "still more factional and anti-Party than that of May 9th." [16] He called the new declaration a deceitful maneuver, drawn up "craftily...by some sly attorney, by some petty-fogging lawyer."

> On the one hand, the declaration avows complete loyalty to the Comintern, the unshakeable fidelity of the authors of the declaration to the Communist International....On the other hand, the declaration states that its authors cannot assume responsibility for carrying out the decision of the Presidium of the Executive Committee....If you please, on the one hand, complete loyalty; on the other, a refusal to carry out the decision of the Comintern. And this is called loyalty to the Comintern!...What sort of loyalty is that? What is the reason for this duplicity? This hypocrisy? Is it not obvious that this weighty talk of loyalty and fidelity to the Comintern is necessary to Comrade Lovestone in order to deceive the membership?[17]

> It cannot be denied that our American comrades, like all Communists, have the right to disagree with the draft of the decision of the Commission and have the right to oppose it....But...we must put the question squarely to the members of the American delegation: When the draft assumes the force of an obligatory decision of the Comintern, do they consider themselves entitled not to submit to that decision?[18]

Stalin then dwelt at length on the evils of factionalism and his barbs hit us in the minority as well as the majority. He held up the American Party as an example of the havoc factionalism can wreak. He stated that factionalism:

> weakens communism, weakens the communist offensive against reformism, undermines the struggle of communism against social-democracy...weakens the Party spirit, it dulls the revolutionary sense...interferes with the training of the Party in the spirit of a policy of principles...undermining its iron discipline...completely nullifies all positive work done in the Party.[19]

He warned the majority against playing “trumps with percentages,” and denied their claim of majority support in the U.S. Party:

> You had a majority because the American Communist Party until now regarded you as the determined supporters of the Communist International....But what will happen if the American workers learn that you intend to break the unity of ranks of the Comintern?...You will find yourselves completely isolated....You may be certain of that.[20]

Stalin’s speech really struck home to me. I had been a member of a faction for the whole five years I had been in the Party; I had been recruited simultaneously into the Party and into a faction. Thus, when Lovestone took over, I had shifted from the Ruthenberg faction to the Foster faction, but after the past month of discussion there was no getting around the fact that factionalism had harmed the Party’s work. It was clear the Party could not make the turn to the left and, in particular, develop the Black movement without the elimination of factionalism.

It was now after midnight, and the Presidium was finally called to vote on the draft address. It was accepted with one vote against, cast by its only American member, Gitlow. A poll was then taken of each of the majority delegates. Each was called to the platform and asked directly if he or she accepted the decision, yes or no?

There was a ripple of excitement when Bedacht, a majority leader and hitherto staunch supporter of Lovestone, broke with the majority and declared that he accepted the decision of the Presidium and would carry it out. He was joined by Noral, the west coast farmers’ organizer.

Lovestone stood by the majority declaration. Six others, including Welsh, answered that while disagreeing with the decision they would follow communist discipline and accept it until it could be raised at the next Party convention. Gitlow spoke last. He declared that not only did he disagree with the decision, but that he would actively fight against it when he returned to the U.S.

Again Stalin took the floor, evidently dissatisfied with the hedging of most of the American delegation. In a quiet voice he pointed out that the American comrades apparently “do not fully realize that to defend one's convictions when the decision had not yet been taken is one thing, and to submit to the will of the Comintern after the decision has been taken is another." He said it involved the ability of communists to act collectively and is "summed up as the readiness to conform the will of the individual comrades to the will of the collective."

He denied that the American Communist Party would perish if the Comintern persisted in its opposition to Lovestone's line, arguing rather that "only one small factional group will perish." The Presidium decision, he concluded, was important because "it will make it easier for the American Communist Party to put an end to unprincipled factionalism, create unity in the Party and finally enter on the broad path of mass political work."[21]

The historic meeting was finally adjourned at 3 A.M. the morning of the fifteenth. It was nearly summer and, as we passed into the street, the early dawn shone on Moscow's gilded church domes. We Lenin School students headed towards our dormitory off the Arbot. At first we were all quiet, each one engrossed in his or her own thoughts, trying to piece together what had happened and assess what it meant for the Party. Breaking the silence, someone asked me if I had witnessed the incident between Stalin and Welsh as we were leaving the hall.

"No," I said, "what happened?"

It seemed that on the way out, Stalin passed Welsh who was standing in the aisle talking to Lovestone. Stalin, in a friendly gesture, extended his hand to Welsh, as if to say "we have our disagreements, but we're still comrades."

Welsh rudely rejected the proferred hand and in a loud voice said to Lovestone, "What the hell does that fellow want?" There was something strange about Welsh I didn't like. His attachment to Lovestone seemed to transcend any communist or political principles. I wasn't really too surprised at this incident, remembering the earlier one with Manuilsky. But I was glad I hadn't seen it.

The Lovestone drama was drawing to a close. The Comintern moved with dispatch to head off the threatened split. On May 17, two days after the Presidium meeting, the Political Secretariat of the CI removed Lovestone, Gitlow, and Wolfe from all positions of leadership in the Comintern and in the Party. At the same time all three were detained in the Soviet Union to await the formal disposition of their cases. Lovestone was warned that to leave the Soviet Union without permission of the Comintern would be considered a violation of communist discipline. Bedacht, Weinstone and Foster, who supported the address, were immediately sent home. Mikhailov (Williams) was also sent to the States as CI rep.

The Comintern cabled the 3,000 word address to the CPUSA. It was received by Lovestone's caretakers Minor and Stachel, who immediately disassociated themselves from Lovestone. Along with the leading ten man majority caucus, they pledged to follow the Comintern decisions. The Central Committee met the same day and unanimously called upon the delegates remaining in Moscow to cease all opposition to the CI.

On May 20, five days after the meeting of the CI Presidium, the address was published in the *Daily Worker* and became the property of the entire Party membership. Lovestone's double-dealing and deception were now apparent to all. The mandate from the Sixth Convention had limited him to seek review of the CI decisions, not to defy them.

In the following days, there was a flood of letters and resolutions from former Lovestone supporters denouncing him, repudiating the actions of their former leaders in Moscow, and unconditionally supporting the Comintern. On May 24, Huiswood, Noral and Mother Bloor, who were still in Moscow, issued a statement. They maintained that they still disagreed with the CI, but had no intention of resisting.

The Central Committee set up interim leadership composed of William Z. Foster, Robert Minor, W.W. Weinstone and Max Bedacht as acting secretary. The new leadership immediately inaugurated a mass campaign to educate the rank-and-file Party members about the political issues involved in the struggle. This campaign swiftly swung the vast majority of the Party behind the CI. On June 22, the U.S. Party was notified by the CI that Lovestone had left Moscow in violation of the Comintern decision and without meeting his promise to submit for publication a political declaration retracting his opposition. Gitlow and Wolfe had left before. Upon his return to the U.S., Lovestone continued his splitting maneuvers. By the end of June, all three were expelled from the Party.

Thus Lovestone's attempt to split the Party failed completely. It was repudiated by almost his entire following. His boasted ninety percent majority shrank to two percent. Only a couple hundred bitter-end right wing factionalists remained loyal to him and were expelled along with him.

The political and organizational line of the Sixth Congress was soon vindicated. Scarcely three months after the expulsion of the Lovestoneites came the stock market crash of October 1929—signaling the onset of the great economic crisis which was to engulf the entire capitalist world and exacerbate the already deepening general crisis of capitalism. The crisis shattered the bourgeois liberal myth of American exceptionalism perpetrated by Lovestone and Pepper.

With the elimination of the six-year-old factional struggle and its chief perpetrators, unity was at last achieved. The Party was now in a position to carry through the left turn called for by the Sixth Congress, now capable of leading the great class and liberation struggles of the next decade.

The political degeneration of the Lovestone leaders was rapid and predictable. Lovestone formed a so-called Communist Party Opposition Group, declaring its purpose to be the "re-establishment of communism in America." He kept up the pretense of being a Marxist-Leninist for a few years but when his anti-Party campaign proved ineffectual, the group fell apart and Lovestone embarked on an open anti-communist course.

He later placed himself in the service of the reactionary trade unionists Matthew Woll and David Dubinsky, with whom he helped sponsor the AFL-CIO anti-communist crusades. In 1963 Lovestone moved up to international prominence as director of the AFL-CIO's Department of International Affairs and George Meany's "Foreign Minister." The International Affairs Department had its own network of ambassadors, administrators and intelligence agents and collaborated closely with the State Department and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in reactionary subversion of trade union movements in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe.[22]

John Pepper was expelled from the Party by the International Control Commission, not for his political crimes, but for lying with respect to the trip to Mexico which he never made and for falsifying an expense account for a fictitious trip to Korea. He wound up working for the Gosplan (State General Planning Commission in the Soviet Union). I occasionally saw him on Tverskaya on his way to or from work. What a come-down for Pepper! From the glamor of international politics to a bureaucrat's desk in the Planning Commission.

Edward Welsh remained Lovestone's man-Friday. Many years later, in the early fifties, I ran into him on the street in New York City. We immediately recognized each other. Surprised and curious, I asked if he were still with Lovestone. He said he was, adding that he knew I was still with the Party. Neither of us had more to say; there was an awkward pause, we said goodbye and went our own ways.

Back at the Lenin School, we of the former minority were elated by the decisions of the commission and the news of the complete rout of the Lovestoneites at home. The political and organizational decisions of the Comintern were accepted unanimously at a meeting of American students held shortly after the close of the commission. Factionalism was condemned and the unity of American students achieved. It was at this meeting that the last two Lovestone holdouts, Gus Sklar and H.V. Phillips, finally capitulated.

THE CRIMEA REVISITED

It was mid-summer and I was again on my way to the Crimea. I looked forward with pleasure to revisiting the lovely peninsula with its subtropical climate, lush beauty and of course, its warm and friendly people. It would be a month until school began, and I intended to spend half my time in rest and relaxation and the remainder in "practical work," which in this case was further observations on the national question.

Arriving in Sevastopol, I went immediately to the Party headquarters where I presented my letter of introduction to the local Party secretary. Where did he think would be the best place for me to go, I asked. The secretary, a big bluff man of Russian or Ukrainian nationality, was evidently very busy.

The anteroom was crowded with people undoubtedly with more important business than mine. He was polite and friendly, however, and in what seemed to me a split-second decision, he said he knew just the place for me—Alushta. It was a resort town on the coast about twenty-five kilometers beyond Yalta, where I had stayed two summers before. He offered to put me up in a rest home where his Party organization had a number of places reserved. That sounded good to me, and I asked him if I would have an opportunity to study the national question there.

"Oh yes," he assured me, "you'll find a number of nationalities in the town there—Tartars, Greeks, Karaite Jews, Germans, Ukranians and even some Russians! How many more could you want?" he joked. And he wished me good luck as his secretary called in the next person from the crowded anteroom. I waited outside while she typed the letter of introduction and then asked her for directions to the Coast Artillery Barracks.

It was a regiment "adopted" by the school in a special fraternal relationship which included mutual visits and cultural exchanges. We students also sent them literature and periodicals from our respective parties. This relationship heightened their political understanding of the international situation and the communist movement abroad. For us it deepened our insight into the role of the Red Army as a politically conscious guardian of Soviet power. It furnished a concrete illustration of how the Red Army functioned. I had met some of the members of the regiment in Moscow, but this was to be my first visit to their barracks. I arrived at the barracks which were situated on the outskirts of the city near the coast and was greeted warmly by the political officer of the regiment whom I had met in Moscow. He introduced me to other officers and men. I was then taken on a tour of the gun sights. They were big coastal guns, elaborately protected behind earth and concrete fortifications.

They were so expertly camouflaged, that it was impossible from the sea to tell anything was there. The huge guns were hidden in underground implacements; each had its own electrical system which raised it by elevator to firing position. After firing they would drop back to their concealed pits. Under each gun was what seemed to be a virtual machine shop.

They had observation posts established along the coast to control the long range fire of the guns. They were proud of their guns and especially proud of their new British range finding equipment.

I asked how they had gotten hold of that, and an officer grinned, "Well, that's what the British would like to know!"

After touring the gun sites, I felt Sevastopol was well defended against any attack from the sea. But alas, the enemy attack on Sevastopol thirteen years later—during the Second World War—was not to come from the sea. It came from the land when the Nazi armies smashed into the Crimea across the narrow Perekov isthmus connecting the Crimea with the Ukrainian mainland. The "hero city" of Sevastopol was to withstand the seige for 250 days before it fell after putting up a stubborn defense which tied down the powerful German army.

Next came the inevitable *beced*—informal conference—with the army men. I was plied with questions about the United States, conditions of Blacks, and Lovestone and the right deviation in the Party. I gave them a rundown on the recent decisions, described the participation of Comrade Stalin and the eventual expulsion of the Lovestoneites. I was impressed by the high political level of the questions they posed and the knowledge they displayed of American affairs.

I stayed with them overnight and was invited to a big hearty meal at their mess. Discussions continued until the bugle sounded lights out. Next morning I was escorted to the station. From there, we drove a lovely, scenic route to the town of Alushta.

Alushta was a beautiful little town by the sea with the Crimean mountain range rising immediately behind it. I found myself in a modern rest home on the outskirts of town with the beach conveniently near—a perfect place to relax and rest. I met the Party Secretary of Alushta, a Tartar. He introduced me to some members of the Party Committee and town Soviet. These committees, I found, were representative of the various nationalities and ethnic groups in the area.

But in general I found nothing particularly new on the national question—it was similar to the situation in the Yalta area where I'd been two years before. All groups were living in peaceful harmony and the cultures of each were mutually respected. Stress was laid, however, on the development of the Turkic language and culture of the Tartars, who comprised the main nationalities of the Crimean Autonomous Republic, about one-third of the total population of the peninsula. After them came Ukrainians, Russians, Greeks, Jews, and Germans in that order. The Tartars, however, were regarded as the basic nationality and it was their homeland dating from the days of the Golden Hordes. These were sufficient factors for an autonomous republic to be set up for them in 1921 with a Tartar president.

But after a couple of weeks in the Crimean paradise I became restless and bored and longed to be back in the hustle and bustle of Moscow. I felt isolated; I wondered what was happening in the U.S. Party. I'd had no news of developments and had heard nothing of the unfinished business of the Black national question. I wanted to talk to Nasanov about plans for our Negro Commission in the Comintern. Then, not least, I missed my wife Inushka.

RETURN FROM THE CRIMEA

I returned to Moscow a few days before the school opened in order to spend some time with Ina. From her I learned that a young Russian woman who worked in the chancellor's office at KUTVA had returned from vacation in the Crimea and was spreading malicious slander about me, portraying me as an insatiable womanizer. The woman was known among the KUTVA students as a scandal-monger, and my friends there paid her no attention. But Ina was afraid the rumors would cause me some harm in other quarters. I remembered having seen the woman in question at the rest home. I had greeted her, but paid her no more attention. Perhaps that was just the trouble.

As I entered the Lenin School building a few days later, I ran into Kursanova. She greeted me with a curt nod and a limp hand.

"I want to have a talk with you, Comrade Haywood," she said.

"Why, certainly, Comrade Kursanova. When?"

"In a few minutes, when I get back to the office."

I suspected then that the slander campaign had reached the school and a moment later my suspicions were shockingly confirmed. Further along the hall I saw a group of my fellow students looking at the wall newspaper and laughing. On seeing me, one of them said, "Why, there's Harry himself." Greeting them, I turned to see the cause for their merriment.

There it was—a cartoon captioned "Comrade Haywood Doing Practical Work in a Crimean Rest Home." The cartoon portrayed me surrounded by a dozen or so pretty Russian girls. It was expertly drawn, I suspected by a professional artist.

I saw nothing funny about it. Furiously I demanded, "Who in hell put that up!"

My friends disclaimed any knowledge of who had drawn it or how it had gotten there. Someone, I believe it was Springy, said, "Calm down, Harry! You're taking it too seriously—it's only a cartoon."

"It's slander," I retorted and immediately headed for Kursanova's office.

"Ah, Comrade Haywood—you saw the cartoon."

"Yes," I said, "I saw it and it's slander."

"Is it now? Or is it simply criticism by some of your fellow students? How about a little self-criticism?"

"How can it be honest criticism when no one will admit drawing it and placing it on the board?" I replied.

"You were at a rest home," she asked. "How did you get there when you were supposed to be doing practical work?"

"I was sent there by the Party secretary in Sevastopol; he saw the letter from the school and knew what I was supposed to do," I replied.

"He probably wanted to get rid of you," she pointed out. I told her I saw no reason why practical work could not be combined with leisure and added that my comrades had said the rumor had been started there by a known scandal-monger. This cartoon, I contended, was just an echo of that malicious campaign.

"Regardless, you shouldn't have allowed yourself to get caught in such a situation," she observed.

I simmered down and we parted on a friendly note. But the source of the cartoon remained a mystery.

As I remember I protested the incident to Maurice Childs, the Party secretary of the English speaking sector and its representative to the School Bureau. I didn't see how the cartoon could have been posted without his knowledge, but he brushed the matter aside.

The following day however, the picture was removed. I believe it was Childs who told me that the artist was a young Mexican in the Spanish language section of the school. I remembered two Mexican comrades had entered the school some months before, but like most of the students they were using pseudonyms.

But this was not the end of the story. A few days after the wall cartoon incident I ran into Marie Houston, a Black KUTVA student from the U.S. Marie had a grudge against me for taking sides against her in some of her personal disputes with other students at KUTVA. Apparently her grudges were many and extended to most of her fellow students.

We exchanged cool formal greetings, and as I was about to pass on she lashed out, "Hey man, I've been hearing all about your carryings on in the Crimea—that's pretty bad stuff! What you trying to do, scandalize our name?" she demanded. "By the way, when you gonna be cleansed? I'm sure gonna be there!" she gloated.

She was referring to the Party cleansing (*chistka*) which was taking place that fall throughout the Soviet Union. I didn't take Marie's threat lightly. A few days before, during the cleansings at KUTVA, she hurled a series of violent and false charges at

Patterson and Maude White. They were kept on the stand for hours attempting to refute them. In Patterson's case, his cleansing had taken up one whole evening and was extended to the next.

William Weinstone, then official Party representative to the Comintern and also a member of the International Control Commission, finally interceded to get Pat off the hook. A curious thing about all this was that to my knowledge Marie was never called to account for her slanderous accusations.

The day of the Party cleansings at the Lenin School finally arrived. The entire collective including the rector, the scrub-woman, maintenance personnel, faculty, clerical workers and the entire student body gathered in the school auditorium.

The chairman of our cleansing committee was none other than the famous old Bolshevik Felix Kohn, member of the Central Control Commission of the CPSU. He had been a member of one of the first Marxist groups in Russia and a friend of Lenin—a person with an unchallengeable record. He was a thin elderly man, stern looking, with a shaggy goatee and flashing eyes under bristling eyebrows. He impressed me as a strict disciplinarian.

He opened the meeting, called attention to the solemnity of the occasion, and then outlined the task, purpose and the procedure to be followed. It was a process of purification, he said, designed to purge from our ranks all noxious elements, factional trouble-makers and self-seeking careerists which a Party in power inevitably attracts to it. Party members were to be examined on the basis of both their individual work assignments and their political commitment as members of the CPSU.

In other words it was to be a scrutiny of both conduct and conviction. All present, whether Party or non-Party, had the duty to come forth if they had criticisms or charges against any Party member. Indeed, it was permissible for people outside the school, anyone who had a complaint against any Party member, to participate. The Party member on the stand was required to give an autobiography—when, how and why he or she joined the Party, and what he or she was doing to merit renewing their membership. In a stern voice, eyes flashing, Kohn warned: "Woe betide anyone who makes false statements or attempts to in any way deceive this commission!"

He then listed the penalties which could be given to Party members for various infractions. First there was a reprimand for minor offenses, a censure for more grave ones, then strict censure with a warning and expulsion as a last resort.

We all sat tensely as the secretary of the commission began to call students to the stand. The commission had five members—sent by the Party from outside the school. Each Party member upon taking the stand was required to turn his or her membership card over to the commission, to be returned only if the commission felt that he or she had answered all questions to its satisfaction. In other words the commission decided whether you retained the right to remain in the Party.

Eventually my turn came. I must admit I was rather nervous. I took the stand and sketched my background and Party experiences, what I got out of study at the school, what I intended to do when I returned home. No one rose to criticize me. And to my great relief, Marie didn't even show up. In fact, Kursanova commended me as a good student and spoke favorably about my studies on the national question.

The cleansing continued for several exciting days but no serious infraction of Party discipline or lack of Party loyalty was found among our English-speaking group. The cleansing, however, was a more serious matter among students from underground parties in fascist or semi-fascist countries. As I remember, a police agent was flushed out in the Polish group.

But who had drawn that cartoon? This mystery was not to be cleared up until forty years later, although I had always had some faint suspicion as to the artist's identity. I attended a birthday party for the world-renowned Mexican muralist Davido Siquieros. As a result of an international protest movement, he had just been released from prison where he and other revolutionaries had been incarcerated, charged with leading and fomenting the National Railway Strike of 1959.

It was a festive occasion in typical Mexican style, complete with fireworks and a round-the-clock open house. Hundreds of comrades, friends and neighbors gathered to congratulate the great artist. As I was introduced to him by a friend a thought suddenly occurred to me: Had he not been a student at the Lenin School in 1929, I asked.

"Yes," he responded, looking at me curiously. "Yes, I was there."

"Were you the one who drew a cartoon for the school wall newspaper titled 'Comrade Haywood doing practical work in a Crimean Rest Home?' "

His eyes lit up with a gleam of recognition. "Yeah, that was me."

"Well," I said, "I'm that Harry Haywood." We both burst out laughing and he proceeded to tell the others around us the whole story.

"Who was the other young Mexican with you at the school?" I asked.

"Oh, that was Encina." (Encina was the General Secretary of the Mexican Communist Party.) "He's still in jail," Sequieros added sadly.

Chapter 11

My Last Year in the Soviet Union

Following Lovestone's expulsion from the Party in June of 1929, Nasanov and I continued our work in the Negro Commission of the Comintern. We both loved the work which involved a continuous check on the press of the U.S. Party (then the *Daily Worker* and *The Communist*); the minutes and resolutions of the Party's leading committees; and other labor and progressive publications in which Party members were active.

This included *Labor Unity,* the organ of the TUUL, and *Labor Defender* which was put out by the International Labor Defense. This material was to be found in the Comintern Information Department whose American representative at the time, as I remember, was A. G. Bosse.

As I acquainted myself with the material, I became pleased and excited at the advances the Party had made in work among Blacks. The U.S., it seemed, had entered the third period with a bang—a rapid decline of the economy and growth of mass unemployment. Most impressive was the widespread resistance of workers to "rationalization" (wage cutting, stretch-out and speed-up), and the anti-union terror campaign of employers backed by the federal, state and local governments. The resistance was reflected in the needle trades, mining, automobile and textile industries.

All this was two months before the October 1929 stock market crash and the onset of the economic crisis which was to embrace the whole capitalist world. The Party, now freed from factionalism, had united on the basis of the Comintern Address and was vigorously moving forth to organize and lead the mounting struggles of the workers.

Nasanov and I felt the best evaluation of the Party's work among Blacks was put forward by Cyril Briggs in a series of articles which appeared in the June, July and September 1929 issues of *The Communist.*[1]

Briggs characterized the Sixth Congress of the CI as a major turning point for the Party in carrying out a revolutionary program in Afro-American work. Using the struggle against white chauvinism as a barometer of the effectiveness of the Party's work in this area, he pointed out that "prior to the Sixth Congress, white chauvinism in the American Party (in both factions!), unmasked at that Congress by Comrade Ford, and mercilessly condemned by that supreme revolutionary body, made progress in Negro work well-nigh impossible."[2]

Before the Sixth Congress there were only a handful of Blacks in the Party, but since then the Central Committee had set up a National Negro Department to help in the formulation of policies and in the direction of the work nationally. District and section Negro committees were formed in most areas of Party concentration.

At the Sixth Party Convention, Black comrades were elected to the highest body in the Party, the Central Committee, and to the National Executive Committee of the Young Communist League. They were also elected to the Party's Politburo, the National Bureau of the League, and added to district committees and section committees. Another step forward was registered at the founding convention of the TUUL in September 1929; of the 800 plus delegates, 68 were Black.

Nevertheless, this was only a beginning. White chauvinism was still pervasive and represented a powerful influence in the Party. Briggs then turned a critical spotlight on the most dramatic struggle of the period—the strike of Southern textile workers at Gastonia, North Carolina, which took place in the spring of 1929. This strike—led by the Party and the National Textile Workers Union, an affiliate of the TUEL—was the Party's first mass activity in the South. It was therefore a test for the new line on the unions and on the Afro-American question.

The Southern textile industry—and Gastonia's mills were no exception—was traditionally a white industry with Blacks about five percent of the work force. The whites were new proletarians from the mountains and farms, employed by northern mill owners who had moved their mills south to exploit the cheap and unorganized labor of the region. In Gastonia, these workers responded to their exploitation by striking against "stretch-out" and starvation conditions.

The bosses used the old battlecry of white supremacy to divide the Black and white workers and try to break the strike. It created an atmosphere of reeking race hatreds and suspicion, and this was the state of things when the National Textile Workers Union launched its organizing campaign in Gastonia.

The mill owners and their local myrmidons—the sheriff, police, militia, foremen, managers and extra-legal arms of the KKK—sought to maintain the status quo threatened by the strikers. The strike speedily took on a political character, reaching the point of armed conflict.

The heroic woman strike leader, Ella May Wiggins, was pursued and shot down in broad daylight. The Gastonia chief of police was killed and several deputies wounded when they attacked a tent colony which strikers had formed after being evicted from their company-owned homes. Sixteen strike leaders, including some communists, stood trial for the murder of the police chief.

The reign of terror that ensued made the situation extremely difficult for our organizers. Clearly there could be no retreat from the principle of organizing Blacks and whites into one union on the basis of complete equality, yet there were some union and Party leaders who wanted to back down in the face of the prevailing chauvinism among the white workers.

The Central Committee firmly laid down the line against such a retreat. Following the line of the ECCI resolution, it insisted that the new union embrace all nationalities and colors and that separate unions for Blacks were to be organized only in those trades from which they were barred by the reactionary policies of white union leaders. After their initial wavering, the local leadership rallied to the correct line. Blacks and whites were organized into the same union.

Testimony to this is a dramatic incident involving my brother Otto. I hadn't heard much of Otto since he'd returned to the States, only that he'd been placed on the Central Committee at the Sixth Convention and was working in the Negro Department of the TUUL. As TUUL organizer, he had been sent to Gastonia. He was at nearby Bessemer City at the time of the attack on the strikers' tent colony and the shooting of the police chief. Otto was unaware of what had happened and that the stage had been set for his lynching should he return.

As an article in the *Daily Worker* described the incident:

> Otto Hall...was on his way...to Gastonia on the night of the raid...the white workers, realizing the grave danger to which Hall was exposed if he happened to get into Gastonia that night, formed a body guard and went to meet Hall and warned him to keep away. They met Hall two miles out of town and took him in a motorcar to Charlotte where they collected enough money among themselves to pay his railroad fare to New York. No sooner had Hall embarked on the train a mob broke into the house where he hid before his departure. It was only timely action on the part of these white workers that saved the life of their Negro comrade.[3]

The Gastonia struggle signaled a new period in the Party's trade union work—a period which characterized the thirties overall. Under the leadership of the Communist Party and our left trade unions, Black and white workers were organized into the same unions on the basis of equality and in the common fight against the capitalists. The Party was able to mobilize mass support for the strike and the sixteen leaders framed for murder, in cities throughout the South and the country as a whole. Otto personally spoke in some twenty-seven cities.

But what was to be said about the needle trades union, long a bastion of the left? Briggs pointed out the "criminal" apathy of the comrades working in this area. The Needle Trades Industrial Workers' Union only organized Blacks in times of strike, and as a result, had very few Black members. While the union had special departments and scores of functionaries for Greek, Italian, Jewish and other immigrant workers, there was no Afro-American department and not a single Black functionary. This, at a time when in New York alone there were several thousand Black needle trades workers.

Comrades in the Miners Union made a similar underestimation of work among Afro-Americans. This union, operated in an industry which had a large number of Black miners—in some fields even out-numbering the white workers—but had not yet appointed a single Black organizer. In Illinois District Eight (my old district), there occurred a particularly blatant case of white chauvinism. William Kruse, the district organizer, refused to share the pool of funds available for wages with Comrade Isabel, the Black functionary. He persisted in this practice despite the demands of the National Secretariat that the funds be shared equitably.[4]

Despite the numerous examples of white chauvinism, there was no doubt that the Party was making advances in regards to Negro work. In fact, it was precisely because of these advances that chauvinistic practices which hitherto had gone under wraps were brought out into the open and attacked. Briggs' series of three articles was the sharpest attack on white chauvinism ever published by the Party.

Their publication reflected that despite the many shortcomings in our work, there was a growing awareness in the Party leadership of the seriousness of the question. The rapid deterioration of economic conditions affecting both Black and white workers allowed no complacency. If the Party was going to play a leading role in the coming struggles, it would have to carry on a continuous struggle against white chauvinist ideology and practices.

I was heartened by Briggs's articles. At the same time, however, I was somewhat disturbed. While Briggs evoked the Comintern resolution on the Negro question in his blast against white chauvinism, he was curiously silent on the theory and program underlying the resolution. It was certainly true, as Briggs said, that among revolutionary white workers, white chauvinism was often manifested in the "general underestimation of the role of the Negro masses in the revolutionary struggle." But to say no more than that was to avoid the essence of the question.

What were the ideas and theories fueling this underestimation? Clearly they were to be found in the remnants of Lovestone's line which still clung to the Party—the hangovers of the social democratic view which considered the fight against the special oppression of Blacks to be a diversion from the class struggle.

The new line was a drastic break with the social chauvinist doctrines of the past, and in it the Party had a mighty weapon in the fight against white chauvinism and petty bourgeois nationalism of the Garvey stripe. But the new line could not simply be declared, it had to be fought for.

As months passed, Nasanov and I searched in vain through the Party press and documents for further discussion of the 1928 resolution. The resolution of the October 1929 plenum of the Central Committee had noted the increasingly important role the Black proletariat played in building the new unions. Its Program of Action called for "merciless struggle against white chauvinism and any attempt towards segregating the Negro workers." [5] Following the plenum, the National Agitprop Department had promised to publish a special discussion bulletin on the Afro-American question. None ever materialized, however.

By the beginning of 1930, it was becoming clear to us that there was not only confusion in the Party, but definite opposition to the new line.

As if to confirm our misgivings, the February 1930 issue of *The Communist* contained an article by veteran Black communist Otto Huiswood, titled "World Aspects of the Negro Question." It was the first article in a year to broach the theoretical aspects of the question, but it was a direct challenge to the line of the Comintern Sixth Congress.

Huiswood sought to establish a difference in character between the oppression of Blacks in Africa and the West Indies, and those in the USA. The question in Africa and the West Indies, he contended, was a national question, but in the United States, it was a race question. According to Huiswood, the Black minority in the

U.S. lacked the requisites of a nation. It had "no distinct language and culture from the dominant racial group...its only distinguishing feature is its racial origin."[6]

Thus, Huiswood pulled the Afro-American question out of the category of national-colonial questions and dumped it back into the muddy waters of "race question." He had fallen back upon Sik and his "social race" theory, which asserted the primacy of the race factor, race ideologies, in the oppression of U.S. Blacks.

By making race primary, Huiswood's article denied the validity of self-determination as a slogan for Black liberation. It rejected the concept of Blacks in the South as an oppressed nation, and therefore rejected the perspective which called for the development of a national revolutionary movement based on the masses of Black soil-tillers and workers in that region.

Huiswood's article demanded an answer. Nasanov and I felt that it could in the end serve a positive purpose in that our reply afforded an excellent opportunity to clarify a number of areas of misunderstanding and confusion. Our response could be the vehicle to finally settle accounts with Sik and demolish his "social race" theory. Nasanov had already written a polemic against Sik exposing the latter's incredible ignorance of Lenin's position on the national question. This was to be published in the April issue of *The Communist*.[7] I would take on Huiswood directly.

First I answered his assertion that Blacks in the U.S. had no special culture. "Negroes have a culture which reflects their whole historical development as a people in the U.S.," I pointed out. "And as to separate language...this is not one of the prerequisites of the nation."[8] I referred to Stalin, who said: "A common language for every nation, but not necessarily different languages for different nations."[9]

But was there in fact a difference in the character of oppression between Blacks in the U.S., on the one hand, and in Africa and the West Indies on the other? I concluded that there was no such difference. It was clear to me, of course, that Blacks in the U.S. were not a colony in the formal sense of the term. Unlike a colony, they were not separated geographically from the metropolitan country.

There was, however, no substantive difference in the character of Black oppression in the United States and the colonies and semi-colonies. In both instances, imperialist policy was directed towards forcibly arresting the free economic and cultural development of the people, towards keeping them backward as an essential condition for super-exploitation.

In attempting to prove a difference in the character of oppression, Huiswood wound up downgrading the anti-imperialist content of the Black liberation struggle in the United States.

Since the Sixth Congress I had given considerable thought to the race factor and its role in the question of U.S. Blacks.

Certainly it was clear that race played an important role in the Afro-American question, but it was only one element and not the central question itself.

Of course, I pointed out: "It would be a serious mistake to underestimate the profound social role played by these theories. Arising first as a moral sanction for a national colonial policy, these dogmas become fixed in laws, in turn influence politics and in this manner react again upon the social and economic basis, sharpening and deepening the exploitation of subject peoples and perpetuating the existing social relations."[10]

In reality, I wrote, the racial persecution of Blacks was a particular form and device of national oppression. The racial element was a peculiarity of the question of U.S. Blacks. Nowhere, with the exception of apartheid in Southern Africa, had race been made to play such a decisive role. Nowhere had it served for such a long period as an instrument of ruling class oppression. The prominence of racial ideologies in Black oppression in the U.S. arose from the necessity of the white rulers to maintain the degradation of Blacks in the midst of the most modern and advanced capitalist society in the world.

Under these conditions the bourgeois rulers had to pursue "the most energetic policy in order to keep up the bar of separation between white and Negroes, i.e., retard the process of assimilation and thus preserve the conditions for the super-exploitation of the latter."[11]

In the absence of pronounced cultural distinctions such as language or religion, I argued, the “racial visibility” of U.S. Blacks was used by bourgeois social theorists as the most convenient factor upon which to erect spurious theories of white supremacy, in order to set them apart from the masses of the white population as permanent objects of scorn.

Sik, (and thus Huiswood) on the other hand, counterposed the race question to the national question. They asserted that Blacks were separated from the dominant white race solely by “artificial racial divisions and race oppression arising on this basis.” Sik compounded these errors when he reduced the whole national question to a struggle between competing bourgeoisies for markets:

> Among American Negroes there is no developing industrial bourgeoisie, hindered in its economic development the struggle of which (for its free economic development) for the winning of internal markets and for the removal of obstacles standing in the path of economic progress, could give these national movements a progressive character.[12]

But the national question, as Stalin pointed out, had undergone changes from that earlier period when it first appeared as part of the bourgeois revolution. Now, in the period of socialist revolution, it was part of the struggle of the proletariat:

> It is quite evident that the main point here is not that the bourgeoisie of one nationality is beating, or may beat, the bourgeoisie of another nationality in the competitive struggle, but that the imperialist group of the ruling nationality is exploiting and oppressing the bulk of the masses, above all the peasant masses, of the colonies and dependent nationalities and that, by oppressing and exploiting them, it is drawing them into the struggle against imperialism, converting them into allies of the proletarian revolution.[13]

This was in sharp contrast to the formulation put forward by Sik and espoused by Huiswood. Sik, I contended, made the ideological factor of “racism” more important than the social question itself. Thus, in asserting the primacy of racial factors in the question, Sik and Huiswood reduced the Black liberation struggle to a struggle against racial ideology. They saw only the bourgeois assimilationist trend, "a striving towards intermingling and amalgamation, towards full social equality" in the struggle and not the potential national revolutionary trend of the masses.[14]

The Black liberation struggle was reduced to a feeble bourgeois liberal protest against racism and racist ideology, divorced from its economic roots, and to be resolved through education and humanitarian uplift.

Feeling that it would add some clarity to the situation, I ended my piece with the serious economic and historical analysis of the question that Sik and Huiswood had so assiduously avoided. As I saw it, the evolution of American Blacks as an oppressed nation was the result of the unfinished bourgeois democratic revolution of the Civil War and Reconstruction.

The advent of imperialism froze the Blacks in their post-Reconstruction position—landless, semi-slaves in the South. It permanently blocked the road to fusion of Blacks and whites into one nation on the basis of equality under capitalism. The struggle for genuine equality was thenceforth ultimately bound in the South to take a national revolutionary and socialist revolutionary direction. This position defined the status of Blacks in the north as an unassimilable national minority, as the shadow of the plantation fell upon them throughout the country.

I think Huiswood was won over by my argument; at least I saw nothing more in the Party press trumpeting Sik's "race" theories. In looking back on the thing now, I think it was a sort of skirmish in the war to carry out a revolutionary program on the Black national question. As long as the Party leadership vacillated in carrying out the line of the Sixth Congress, such old and reactionary theories were bound to persist.

I must say, however, that things were not standing still at home. While progress in the struggle was slow, it was progress nevertheless. Amid a great upsurge in the workers' movement, the Party was beginning to implement the line of the Sixth Congress, though there was still some vacillation.

Our biggest thrill that spring had been the nationwide demonstrations of the unemployed led by the Party and the TUUL on March 6, 1930. Over one and a quarter million workers responded to the Party's call in over a dozen cities coast to coast. Hundreds of workers and Party leaders were arrested. William Z. Foster, Robert Minor, Israel Amter and Harry Raymond were sentenced to three years in jail for leading a demonstration of 110,000 in New York's Union Square.[15] They served at least a year of these sentences.

The Party also led large and militant May Day demonstrations in several cities. All this clearly indicated that the Party was becoming a leader of the masses, as more and more people were thrown into struggle by the deepening economic crisis and the capitalist offensive.

The Party chalked up an astounding success in its recruitment drive. In a period of two or three months the Party recruited into its ranks over 6,000 new members, 90% from basic industry and 1,000 of whom were Blacks.[16] A considerable number of the latter had come from the disintegrating Garvey movement.

In the midst of this upsurge the Seventh Convention of the U.S. Party convened in New York on June 22, 1930, and Nasanov and I followed the proceedings closely. The Party's estimate of the economic crisis and perspectives for the future were discussed in detail, emphasizing the need to defeat the right deviation in the Party.

As summarized by Browder, then General Secretary, the convention observed "that the economic crisis shows the stabilization of capitalism approaching its end, that it brings close the realization of war, and that it will in many countries be transformed into a political crisis, and that the working class will be more and more unable to find any path except that of revolutionary struggle." At the same time, the convention recognized the need to struggle against the "leftist" concept of the crisis as the "automatic bearer of revolution."[17]

Internally the Party was in a qualitatively different position than it had been at the time of the Sixth Convention in 1929. It had broken away from the crippling factionalism that had all but paralyzed its work. It was now consolidating its forces on the basis of the decisions of the CI and had seized the initiative in the growing revolutionary trend in the country.

There were a score of Black delegates (17%) present and for the first time the Afro-American question was characterized as *"the* problem for our Party."[18] While it was evident that important advances had been made in the work, the convention brought out that "this could not be credited to the clarity of understanding of the Party as a whole,"[19] and that a "proper orientation is lacking."[20]

Much discussion and debate did not clear up this confusion. Browder, for instance, denigrated the slogan of self-determination by making the Black rebellion contingent upon a revolutionary situation in the whole country. "The transformation of this slogan into one of action is conditioned upon the maturing of a revolutionary situation for American capitalist society."[21] Overall, however, we felt the convention represented progress in terms of work among U.S. Blacks.

My three-year term at the Lenin School was drawing toward a close in June 1930. I began thinking about home and what awaited me on my return. I had little organizational experience in the Party before coming to the Soviet Union, and now began to wonder what type of work I would be doing.

But I was to find that Nasanov had other immediate plans for me. He felt that I should stay for a few months longer and work with the CI. It was felt (I presumed by Kuusinen and others) that the Comintern should intervene once more on the Black question. Clearly the brief resolution adopted at the Sixth Congress two years previous was not sufficient. Now a more detailed statement of the question was needed. They had in mind another CI Commission on the question that would meet after the Seventh Convention of the U.S. Party—one set up to discuss and work out such a statement when all the proceedings from that convention were available. The convention would undoubtedly point up remaining areas of confusion.

"Wouldn't it be best for you to stay, Harry?" asked Nasanov. "Eventually everything will work out," he said, "but it would be better for you to return with a new CI resolution. That way you'll be off to a good start. If you left now, you might get battered about in the fights there."

THE RILU'S FIFTH CONGRESS

The Fifth Congress of the Red International of Labor Unions (RILU) was to convene in Moscow August 15, 1930. Delegates started arriving several weeks early. The U.S. delegation, thirty strong, included seven Blacks—the largest number ever to attend an RILU Congress. They had come to Moscow via Hamburg where they had participated together with Africans and West Indian blacks in the founding conference of the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers, initiated by the RILU.

The Hamburg delegation was led by James Ford, head of the Negro Department of the Trade Union Unity League, a member of the executive committee of the RILU, and provisional chairman and chief organizer of the Hamburg Conference. His co-worker and assistant was George Padmore, also a TUUL national organizer.[22]

The U.S. delegation included: Harold Williams, KUTVA graduate and a member of the railroad workers union in Chicago; Helen McClain, a Philadelphia needle trades worker; Ike Hawkins, a Pennsylvania coal miner; and Arthur Murphy, a Pennsylvania steelworker. Of the delegation I only knew Ford and Padmore, and I hastened to make the acquaintance of the other delegates.

They were a young, enthusiastic group, fresh from struggles in their respective industries in which they had played leading roles. I was especially impressed by the young Black woman from Philadelphia, Helen McClain. She was a natural leader, lively, attractive, humorous and the center of attention.

The delegates filled me in on news from home and related what had happened at the Hamburg Conference. The conference had been in preparation for nearly a year. A provisional committee had been set up under the chairmanship of Jimmy Ford. It was originally scheduled to be held in London, metropolis of the world's greatest colonial power. But it appeared that the conference organizers had reckoned without their hosts.

The preparations came under the scrutiny of His Majesty's

Labor Government, headed by Ramsay MacDonald, whose Colonial Secretary was the well known Fabian Socialist, Sydney Webb. They would not allow the conference to meet in London and at the last minute, delegates and organizers moved it to Hamburg, Germany. After some delay it opened on July 7, 1929.

There were seventeen regular delegates and three fraternal (non-voting) delegates representing 20,000 workers in seven countries. Besides the U.S. delegates, there were delegates from Jamaica, Nigeria, Gambia, the Gold Coast (now Ghana), the former German colonies of the Cameroons (now Cameroon) and South Africa. The South African delegate was a white trade unionist, an active fighter for black-white unity in the trade union movement, who was acting as a proxy for a black trade unionist whom the apartheid government had denied a passport.

The conference lasted three days. There was an interchange of experiences; reports by Ford, Padmore and Patterson (the last a fraternal delegate from the Anti-Imperialist League). A number of resolutions were adopted and a permanent organization formed—the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers. An executive board was elected, including Ford, Hawkins, McClain and Padmore from the U.S.; Kouyate from French West Africa; Frank MacCaulay from Nigeria; Albert Nzula from South Africa; G. Small of Gambia; and G. Reid of Jamaica. Representatives from Haiti, Liberia and East Africa were to be added.

A monthly publication, *The Negro Worker*, was established with Padmore as the editor. Headquarters of the organization were set up in Hamburg. Many black sailors came into that international port—the second largest in Europe—and the organization's literature later was circulated there by these sailors throughout Africa.

The International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers was the first attempt to bring together black workers on a world scale. Though the founding conference was small, it was historically important, because it was the first time Black workers from Africa and the Americas had gotten together. It was a wedge into black Africa which hitherto, with the exception of South Africa, had been isolated from the world revolutionary movement.

The main effort of the organization was to promote trade union organization in Africa and the West Indies, linking them up with the world revolutionary trade union movement led by the RILU. Black workers in the U.S. were to play a vanguard role in this endeavor because of their greater political and organizational experience, the result of their position as an oppressed people in the heartland of the most advanced capitalist country.

The Fifth Congress of the RILU met in the *Dom Soyuzov* (House of the Unions)—meeting place for most of the international congresses held in Moscow. I attended a number of sessions of the congress, along with delegates from fifty-five countries. As this was also the Tenth Anniversary of the RILU, business sessions were accompanied by a number of festivities. Our Soviet hosts seemed determined to make it a memorable occasion.

One of the things I remember best about the congress was the presence of a dozen or so veterans of the 1871 Paris Commune—now old men in their seventies and eighties. As I remember, they wore uniforms—red caps, red-lined blue capes and short white canvas leggings. At the opening celebration, one of the men on seeing us rushed up to embrace me, welcoming us as "my brothers," fighting "for the world commune."

When the congress opened, the Moscow press published an article by RILU leader A. Lozovsky. He listed the main tasks of the congress:

> Closer to the masses by means of the united front from below, combat Right opportunism and 'left' sectarianism, the actual leadership of the economic mass struggle of the proletariat, aid for the weakest sections of the world proletariat, closer contact of the colonial slaves with the working class of the capitalist countries and the proletariat of the Soviet Union.[23]

The RILU had come to this approach through years of struggle which Lozovsky had summarized in an article published two weeks before the congress.[24] When the RILU was formed in 1920, the main errors came from "left" anarcho-syndicalist tendencies. But in later years, especially after the Ninth Plenum of the ECCI and the Fourth RILU Congress in 1928, the main danger came from the right. By 1930, open right opposition to the decisions of these meetings had been defeated and remaining right tendencies, though still very dangerous, were under attack.

Lozovsky warned, however, that in the course of the fight against right opportunist tendencies and for the line of "class against class" and independent leadership of economic struggles, left-sectarian tendencies had cropped up, involving the danger of alienation from the masses. This left tendency was one which lumped together the social-fascist (reformist) leaders and the workers who followed them. Not knowing how to work in reformist trade unions for the realization of the "united front from below," they shouted "leftist" slogans such as "permanent general strike," and "armed strikes," all of which remained mere words.

Finally, Lozovsky pointed to the RILU's weaknesses:

> The most important of these faults are: lagging behind the mass, and the disproportion between political influence and organizational consolidation of this influence...In spite of all this, the RILU has accomplished a great work in uniting, rallying and ideologically welding together the forces of the international revolutionary movement.[25]

The congress only lasted about ten days; I attended a number of sessions and had the chance to hear Lozovsky, Padmore and James Ford, who reported on the Hamburg Conference.

The conference broke down into working commissions; each national delegation met to discuss their respective problems. After the congress adjourned, the delegates were taken on tours of the Soviet Union, the Dnieperstroy Dam, the Stalingrad plants and other sights.

THE 1930 RESOLUTION

The Negro Commission of the CI convened in late August, under the chairmanship of Otto Kuusinen. Members of the commission included: Earl Browder, James Ford, Bill Dunne, William Weinstone, William Patterson, Mingulian (head of the Anglo-American Secretariat), Mikhailov (CI rep to the U.S.

Party), Nasanov, myself and several Black students from the Lenin School and KUTVA.[26]

Kuusinen was well versed in the problems of the U.S. Party and its work among Blacks. Prior to the commission, and in preparation for it, he had talked on numerous occasions with Nasanov and myself as well as with leading U.S. comrades present in Moscow. He had also received a report from Mikhailov who had recently returned from a visit to the U.S.

He immediately got down to the business at hand. As I remember, he commended the U.S. Party on its recent progress in Afro-American work and its struggle against white chauvinism. This was reflected in the fact that the Party in the last year had recruited over 1,000 Blacks into its ranks.

However, he observed, despite this advance, the pre-convention discussion preceding the Seventh Convention of the Party and the convention itself revealed that there was still much confusion on the question. This fact had been admitted by the leading American comrades themselves. Looking over the materials from the discussion on the question, it was quite clear, he noted, that the Party had not yet overcome all underestimation of the slogan of the right of self-determination. There were still large areas of unclarity on the question generally.

Kuusinen then proceeded to pinpoint these areas as: a false counterposing of the slogan of "social equality" and "the right of self-determination" and the lack of understanding of their interrelationship. The U.S. convention had raised, but not answered, the following questions: Should the right of self-determination be considered only a slogan of propaganda or one of action? Should separatist tendencies among Blacks be supported or opposed? Should the area of Black concentration in the South be regarded as a colony or as an integral part of the national economy of the United States? Could a revolutionary uprising occur in the South independent of the revolutionary movement in the country as a whole?

Kuusinen suggested the discussion center on these areas of unclarity without excluding any other questions comrades might want to raise. After the discussion, a new resolution should be drafted addressing itself to these questions. I noticed the bitterness and acrimony that had characterized earlier meetings were absent from the discussions that followed. Freed from factional considerations, it was evident that everyone was honestly seeking clarity on the question.

After a few days of discussion, Kuusinen himself undertook to draft a resolution. Further discussion followed, but on the whole there was agreement. After a few minor changes it was adopted by the commission and eventually became the resolution of the American Party on the Black national question.

The resolution proceeded straight to the heart of the controversial issues. It reasserted the position of the Sixth Congress which defined U.S. Blacks as an oppressed nation. Implicitly, it rejected the position of Sik and others with their one-sided emphasis on race as the primary factor in Black oppression. Stressing instead the basic social and economic factors, it defined it as "a question of an oppressed nation which is in a peculiar and extraordinarily distressing situation of national oppression, not only in view of the problem of racial distinctions (marked differences in the color of skin, etc.), but above all, because of considerable *social antagonisms* (remnants of slavery)."

The resolution struck out at the tendency to counterpose the slogans of "social equality" and the "right of self-determination" and dealt in detail with their interrelationship. In this respect, it pointed out the necessity of making a clear distinction between the north and the South in the application of these slogans—between the oppressed Black nation in the South and the national minority in the north.

Equality, the resolution contended, could only be obtained by the continuous fight for abolition "of all forms of economic and political oppression of the Negroes, as well as their social exclusion, the insults perpetrated against them and their segregation. This is to be obtained by constant struggle by the white and Black workers for effective legal protection for Blacks in all fields, as well as actual enforcement of their equality and combating of every expression of Negrophobia. One of the First Communist slogans is: Death for Negro lynching!"[27]

The demand for equality, the resolution said, "applies to all Negroes, in the North as well as in the South." In the north it embraced all, or almost all, the special needs of the masses of Blacks. This, however, was not so in respect to the South, where the situation of Blacks was that of an oppressed nation. Here, the resolution held, "the main Communist slogan must be: *The right of self-determination of the Negroes in the Black Belt.*"[28]

In the South, the attainment of full equality involved the question of political power needed for its enforcement and this could be construed in no other manner than political power in the hands of the Black masses of peasants and workers of that region. This in turn could only be achieved through the fulfillment of the main slogan of the right of self-determination.

This did not mean that the slogan of equality was not applicable to the South where Blacks suffered "the glaring lack of all equality." But here it applied to the most urgent partial or immediate demands of the Black masses. The two slogans were thus closely connected; the winning of self-determination in the South was the prerequisite for full equality in the north.

Anticipating the possibility of autonomous demands in the north, the resolution added:

> The struggle for the equal rights of the Negroes does not in any way exclude recognition and support for the Negroes' rights to their own special schools, government organs, etc., wherever the Negro masses put forward such national demands of their own accord.[29]

The resolution emphasized that the question was a "national question in the U.S., not only in the South but also in the North." It went on to say that "The struggle for equal rights for the Negroes is in fact one of the most important parts of the proletarian class struggle in the United States." White workers must:

> march *at the head* on this struggle. They must everywhere make a breach in the walls of segregation and "Jim-Crowism" which have been set up by bourgeois slave-market morality... white workers must boldly jump at the throat of the 100 per cent bandits who strike a Negro in the face. This struggle will be the test of the real international solidarity of the American white workers.[30]

The resolution rejected the characterization of the Black Belt (the area of Black concentration in the South) as a colony. Such characterization, it contended, could only be based on "artificially construed analogies, and would create superfluous difficulties for the clarification of ideas." However, it warned, "It would be nonetheless false to try to make a fundamental distinction between the character of national oppression to which the colonial peoples are subjected and the yoke of other oppressed nations."

The resolution asserted that the Black Belt "is not in itself, either economically or politically, such a united whole as to warrant its being called a special colony of the United States." Nor on the other hand, was it "such an integral part of the whole United States as any other part of the country."

For one thing, industrialization of the Black Belt, in contrast to most colonies, was not in conflict with the interests of the ruling U.S. imperialists. Therefore, expansion of industry in the Black Belt would "in no way bring a solution to the question of living conditions of the oppressed Negro majority, or to the agrarian question, which lies at the basis of the national question." Industrialization in the area would only sharpen the contradictions in that it would bring forth "the most important driving force of the national revolution, the black working-class."[31]

The resolution lists three fundamental slogans of the liberation movement in the South: 1) The right of self-determination—this slogan, however, can be carried out only in connection with two other basic slogans. 2) Revolutionary land reform. (The resolution pointed out that "landed property in the hands of white American exploiters is the most important basis of the entire system of national oppression.") The agrarian revolution must be completed by the confiscation of the landed property of white landlords and capitalists in favor of the masses of Black farmers. 3) The establishment of the state unity of the Black Belt. The resolution called for the political and geographic unity of the Black Belt, that is, the bringing together of Black majority areas in one governmental administrative unit. This would include a significant white minority. The resolution assails the idea of a nation-state exclusively inhabited by Blacks or the transportation of Blacks to Africa.

Any such attempt "to isolate and transport the Negroes," the resolution warned, "would have the most damaging effect upon their interests. Above all, it would violate the right of the Negro farmers in the Black Belt not only to their present residences and their land, but also to the land owned by the white landlords and cultivated by Negro labor."

The right of self-determination means, according to the resolution, the unlimited right of Blacks in the region to exercise, if they so choose, governmental, legislative and judicial authority over the entire territory and to decide upon the relations between their territory and other nations, including the United States. This would mean the overthrow of the class rule of the U.S. imperialists upon whose power the local landlords and capitalists depended.

The right of self-determination, therefore, included the full freedom of separation for the Black nation. The resolution contended that "if it desires to separate it must be free to do so; but if it prefers to remain federated with the United States, it must also be free to do that."[32] This, the resolution stated, was the correct meaning of self-determination. This right must be fought for as a "free democratic right" whether the U.S. was still a capitalist state or whether the proletarian state had been established.

But the right of self-determination must not be construed as identical with secession. The resolution quoted Lenin:

> We demand freedom of separation, real right to self-determination certainly not in order to recommend "separation," but on the contrary, in order to facilitate and accelerate the democratic rapprochement and unification of nations.[33]

The resolution noted that separatist trends in the Black movement should not be supported "indiscriminately and without criticism." There were reactionary separatist trends as well as national revolutionary trends. An example of the former, it was pointed out, was Garvey's African utopia of an isolated nation-state consisting of Blacks alone. Politically, this was a diversion from the struggle against U.S. imperialism.

> Even if the situation does not yet warrant the raising of the question of uprising, one should not limit oneself at present to propaganda for the demand: 'Right to self-determination,' but should organize mass actions such as demonstrations, strikes, tax-boycott-movements, etc.[34]

The resolution enjoined communists to stand in the forefront of the fight for national liberation and to fight for the hegemony of the Black proletariat in the national struggle. It outlined the Party's tasks in building revolutionary organizations in the South, organizing proletarian and peasant self-defense against the KKK and other like reactionaries.

Final success in this struggle was possible only if supported by mass actions of Black and white proletarians throughout the country. "Only a victorious proletarian revolution will *finally* decide the agrarian question and the national question in the South of the United States, in the interests of the predominating mass of the Negro population in the country."[35]

It spoke directly against those who held that the Black rebellion was contingent upon the maturing of the revolutionary situation in the country as a whole or that it could only develop at the same pace as the overall class struggle. This assumption, widespread in the Party at the time, reflected an underestimation of the inherently explosive character of the liberation struggle in the South.

Lenin defined national rebellion as mass resistance to oppression. "Every act of national oppression calls forth resistance," he wrote. And further that "the tendency of every act of resistance on the part of the oppressed peoples is the national uprising."[36]

The entire thrust of the resolution was to prepare the Party for any contingency:

> Whether the rebellion of the Negroes is to be the outcome of a general revolutionary situation in the United States, whether it is to originate in the whirlpool of decisive fights for power by the working-class, for proletarian dictatorship, or whether on the contrary, the Negro rebellion will be the prelude of gigantic struggles for power by the American proletariat cannot be foretold now. But in either contingency, it is

> essential for the Communist Party *to make an energetic beginning already now* with the organization of *joint mass struggles* of white and black workers against Negro oppression. This alone will enable us to get rid of the bourgeois white chauvinism which is polluting the ranks of the white workers of America, to overcome the distrust of the Negro masses... and to win over to our side these millions of Negroes as active fellow fighters in the struggle for the overthrow of bourgeois power throughout America.[37]

INA

The time for my departure was approaching. I thought of Ina and the future of our marriage. She had been much in my mind these last days in Moscow as I reflected back on our three happy years together.

Despite my busy schedule at the school, we managed to spend most weekends together at her mother's apartment on Malaya Bronaya, a short distance from the school. It was Ina who had introduced me to the cultural life of the Soviet capital. Together we attended theaters, movies, concerts at the Conservatory of Music, and Moscow ballets and operas at the Bolshoi Theater. We often visited the Park of Culture and Rest, a wooded area across from the Kremlin along the Moscow River. It combined restaurants, theaters and amusements. Exhibitions of all sorts were held there as well. Other times we went boating on the Moscow River.

Ina had given up her ballet school studies a year or so before. She was now attending the Institute of Foreign Languages where she was studying English. She displayed a great aptitude for languages and her English was quite good. After only a year of study she had begun to read American literature.

Though not a member of the Communist Party, she was what they called a "non-Party social activist"; that is, sympathetic to the Party and actively supporting its aims of building socialism.

As the time for my departure drew near, we earnestly discussed the future of our marriage. We had agreed that it should not be terminated with my departure. Our idea was that we would eventually get Ina to the States. Of course, I anticipated some difficulties, but to my mind they were not insurmountable. For one thing, we were—by mutual choice—unencumbered by children.

Ina was a friendly, outgoing person and I felt she would have little trouble adjusting to a new environment and would be accepted by the Black community in any of the big urban centers of the north. I would undoubtedly be assigned to national Afro-American work at the center in New York City on my return.

After all, even professional revolutionaries were not homeless itinerants of the old Wobbly tradition. Many were married and had families, even in situations where both were full-time professional revolutionaries.

So as we saw it, our separation was to be temporary. We agreed that once settled in my future work, perhaps in a year or so, I would either send for Ina or return myself to bring her back to the States.

Just before my departure, an incident occurred which forcibly brought home to me the contrast between the socialist world which I was leaving and the racist world which I was about to re-enter.

The incident occurred in Stalingrad, one of the new huge manufacturing cities of the Soviet Union. The location was Tractorstroi, a basic unit of the Five Year Plan with a capacity of 50,000 tractors a year. The plant stretched fifteen miles along the Volga River. They had brought over about three hundred and fifty highly skilled white mechanics from the United States, who—together with their families—formed a small American colony. They had their own restaurants supplied with the best food, tobacco and wines that the Soviets could furnish.

Into this situation stepped a lone Black toolmaker, Robert Robinson. A native of Jamaica and a naturalized U.S. citizen, Robinson was a graduate of Cass Technical High School in Detroit. He had come to Moscow under a one-year contract to instruct young Soviet workers in the Stalingrad plant in the art of toolgrinding. He had formerly been employed by the Ford Motor Company.

On the morning of his arrival in Stalingrad he was shown into the American dining room. He sat down at a table for breakfast before starting work where he was immediately insulted, beaten up and thrown out of the restaurant by two of his white American fellow workers. This attempt to transplant American racism to Soviet soil was met with outrage. It was made a political issue of high order by the Soviet trade unions and Party organizations.

Factory meetings were called throughout the Soviet Union which denounced this crime and expressed the outrage of Soviet workers. They adopted resolutions which were sent to Tractorstroi. The slogan of the day became, "American technique yes! American race prejudice no!" It was given the widest publicity; the culprits were arrested immediately, not for assault and battery but for white chauvinsim, a social crime and therefore far more serious.

A mass public trial, with delegations sent from factories all over the country, was held. The white technicians were sentenced to two years imprisonment which was commuted to deportation to the United States.

Pravda, Izvestia and all of the provincial papers carried editorials summing up the lessons of the trial. In the building up of our industries, they said, we expected many foreign workers to come to the country on contract to help fulfill the Five Year Plan. They would inevitably bring with them their prejudices from the capitalist world. Thus it was necessary for the Soviet workers to maintain vigilance against all forms of racism and nationalism which must be sternly rebuffed.

Robinson himself remained in the Soviet Union where he became a citizen and eventually an engineer. Later he was a deputy to the Moscow Soviets.

I remember the Robinson incident well. At the time it occurred, some of us from the school were in a restaurant. A group of Russians seated near us pointed to us and exchanged comments.

"You heard about that shameful thing that happened at Tractorstoi?"

Our very presence reminded them of the incident. People were very sympathetic to us.

The incident was a dramatic affirmation by Soviet workers of their country's position on the question of race prejudice.

Just a few days later, Ina, her mother and fellow students from the school accompanied me down to the White Russian Station, where I entrained for Berlin. From there, after a short stopover, I journeyed to Paris and then embarked at LeHavre for home.

The long voyage gave me plenty of time for reflection on my stay in the Soviet Union. I thought of how I would put into practice some of the lessons learned during my four-and-a-half-year stay there.

The initial theoretical framework had been set up—now began the difficult task of testing it in practice. How would we build a national revolutionary movement of Blacks in close alliance with the revolutionary working class movement? What would be the problems in organizing Blacks? What resistance to the CI position would I find within the Party's ranks? These were but a few of the questions that passed through my mind as I headed home.

Chapter 12

Return Home: White Chauvinism Under Fire

Put one more "s" in the USA
To make it Soviets;
Put one more "s" in the USA
Oh! We'll live to see it yet!

When the land belongs to the farmers
And the factories to the working men,
The USA when we get control
Will be the USSA then!

Langston Hughes[1]

I arrived in New York in early November 1930. After four and a half years in the Soviet Union, everything seemed quite strange. While passing through customs I lit up a cigarette. A cop snarled at me out of the corner of his mouth, "No smoking here, fella." I was so startled by his rude tone that the cigarette dropped from my lips.

Out in the street I caught a taxi to the national office of the Party, which was then located on East 125th Street in Harlem. I looked at the people along the way. Despair seemed written on their faces; I don't believe I saw a smile all the way uptown. What a contrast to the gay and laughing crowds in Moscow and Leningrad! I had arrived in the first year of the Great Depression; my own depression deepened as we drove through Harlem. I was overwhelmed by Harlem's shabbiness and the expression of hopelessness on the faces of the people.

Arriving at the office, I was greeted by Earl Browder and my old friend Bob Minor. They introduced me to Jack Stachel, a Party leader and national organizer for the TUUL; and Ben Amis, a Black comrade who was then in charge of Afro-American work. All four men were discussing last minute plans for the Anti-Lynching Conference called by the American Negro Labor Congress. It was to be held in St. Louis on November 15, a couple days later.

The Party's plan, as I gathered, was to use this occasion to launch a new organization—the League of Struggle for Negro Rights. This new organization was to replace the now practically defunct ANLC which had proved inadequate and sectarian. The ANLC had been the subject of sharp criticism as early as the Sixth World Congress in 1928.

The idea of the new organization had been discussed at the Party's convention in July. There had also been some discussion at the Negro Commission in the Comintern. The LSNR was conceived as the nucleus of a united front movement around the Party's program for Black liberation. The *Liberator* was to be carried over from the ANLC as the official publication of the new organization.

After greeting me, the comrades continued the discussion. I was just in time to participate in the conference and was given the task of writing a draft manifesto and program for the LSNR. I was asked if I had anything to say. I expressed happiness at being back home after such a long absence, and said that I would do my best to carry out the new responsibility. I was also happy to hear about the expected Southern delegation to the conference, which reflected Party work in the South, and made some remarks about the need for an agrarian program for the Blacks in the South.

I noticed that as I spoke some of the comrades were looking at me curiously, as if puzzled or amused. I wondered about it at the time, but I was to find out why only after the meeting. The YCI representative, a young Russian who had been sitting in on the meeting, said, "Harry, you've got a strong Russian accent in your English! If I'd not been looking directly at you I would have sworn some Russian immigrant was speaking." Of course, I reflected; I had been unconsciously rolling my "r's," a habit that was to stick with me for many years.

I traveled to St. Louis via Detroit and Chicago, in order to see my family—my three aunts, of whom I was very fond, my sister Eppa, and nephew David. I chose to travel by bus in order to get a close up look at the country and the people.

The blight of unemployment and hunger was evident everywhere. It gave the lie to Hoover's slogan of "prosperity is right around the corner." People on the bus were friendly and related their experiences. They seemed hopeless and confused, regarding the Depression as some sort of "natural disaster." They complained about inadequate relief and evictions. From the bus windows I could see Hoovervilles on the outskirts of many towns—vacant lot communities of shacks, made from discarded boards and boxes and inhabited by homeless families.

I stopped over in Detroit to see Clarence Hathaway, my old Lenin School friend, who was then district organizer. We went into a restaurant downtown on Woodward, a couple of blocks from the Party office. We both ordered ham and eggs and after waiting for what seemed an interminable period, our orders were finally brought to the table. I started to eat, but gagged and spit out the first mouthful on my plate.

"What's the matter?" Clarence asked.

"This stuff is as salty as brine!" I said in amazement.

"Yeah?" he said incredulously. "Mine seems to be all right." He tasted some of mine and immediately spat it out, then called the waiter indignantly.

"What's the matter?" the waiter asked.

"My friend's food is so salty it's inedible."

The waiter, with an evil leer, said, "Well, that's the best we can do," and walked away.

It was only then that it struck me that this was their way of discouraging Black patronage. I'd been out of the country so long that I'd forgotten a lot of these things. Clarence and I stalked out of the restaurant, and there was a silence between us. He said, "Let's go to another restaurant in the Black neighborhood."

"I'm not hungry now, I've lost my appetite." I replied. "Clarence, this is your district, you know. You've sure got a lot of work to do!"

I got the bus to Chicago, still angry, and in this mood wrote the first draft of the manifesto and program of the conference. I poured all my anger into the resolution and the whole thing came together very quickly.

I arrived in Chicago. This great industrial center was hard hit by the crisis, with plants and mills partially closed. There was as yet no public welfare, only soup lines and private relief. Blacks were hardest hit of all.

My elderly aunts, respectable law-abiding people and deeply religious, were forced to sell moonshine whiskey in order to make ends meet. They told me this in an apologetic, shamefaced way—"Everybody's got to do something to get by." This really got to me.

I called on old friends and they all wanted to know about my experiences in the Soviet Union. I was interviewed by Lucius Harper of the *Chicago Defender* who was an old friend of the family. I don't remember if the interview was ever published, because I left right afterwards for St. Louis.

I arrived in St. Louis on November 15, the opening day of the conference, and met up with Otto who was a delegate to the meeting. He had been working in the South (probably Atlanta), and he told me of his experiences there and about his near lynching in Gastonia.

I was happy to see so many of my old comrades like Richard B. Moore and Otto Huiswood. Then there was Cyril Briggs. I was anxious to make his acquaintance as I had been in the Chicago post of his African Blood Brotherhood and was a reader of the *Crusader* magazine and his numerous articles in the *Daily Worker*.

There was also Herbert Newton who had been a student at KUTVA and was now back in the thick of the struggle. He was the only Black member of the "Atlanta Six," a group of communist organizers charged under Georgia's Insurrection Act and facing possible electrocution. They had been arrested at an anti-lynching and unemployed demonstration in Atlanta. (The other five defendants were Henry Story, Ann Burlack, Mary Dalton, M.H.

Powers and Joe Carr.) Newton and his co-defendants were released on bail as a result of protest all over the country and were now part of the Southern delegation to the conference. Ben Careathers of Pittsburgh, Hathaway, Browder and Baker were some of the Party leaders present among the delegates. But there were many new faces at the conference—comrades with whom I was to work in coming years.

The convention was called by the ANLC as a national conference against lynching. In 1930 alone there were thirty-eight lynchings, thirty-six Blacks and two whites. The conference was to be transformed into the founding convention of the League of Struggle for Negro Rights.

The gathering opened with a small but enthusiastic mass meeting. Its declared purpose as stated in the *Daily Worker* (November 4, 1930) was "to build a powerful fighting mass movement and a militant newspaper to lead the Negro masses in struggle against oppression and for their demands for full political and social equality and the right of self-determination for Negro majorities in the South." In the spirit of working class solidarity which characterized the entire conference, a presidium of Black and Southern white workers was elected at this session.

The first business session opened on November 15 with forty-four Black and thirty-four white delegates in attendance. A rousing welcome was given the sixteen-member Southern delegation which was led by Mary Dalton—a young white comrade, a National Textile Workers Union organizer and one of the Atlanta Six. Otto Huiswood made the report on the economic and political situation and Herbert Newton reported on organization. The delegates continued to arrive and by November 17, they numbered a hundred-twenty—seventy-three Blacks and forty-seven whites.

The conference then adopted a name for the new organization—the League of Struggle for Negro Rights (LSNR). Upon arrival I had submitted my draft of the manifesto for the league to the Resolutions Committee where it was discussed and approved. The manifesto—a popularization of the Party program for full Black liberation—was now dramatically proclaimed by Mary Dalton amid the continuous applause of the delegates. It declared that

U.S. Blacks were an oppressed nation struggling against U.S. imperialism and called for unity of Black and white workers in the fight against the common oppressor. It called for complete political equality, an end to oppression and lynching, to be obtained through self-determination of the Black nation in the South, the confiscation of the land in favor of Black and white soil-tillers, and state unity of the Black majority area. This could be achieved fully only through socialism.

The immediate program demanded abolition of all forms of discrimination, disenfranchisement, anti-marriage laws and Jim Crow. It urged the establishment of a united trade union movement to include Black workers on the basis of complete equality as an essential step in cementing real fraternal solidarity between Black and white workers on the basis of common interests. It called for "mass violation of all Jim Crow laws," and "death to the lynchers," the banning of the KKK and all extra-legal terrorist organizations, the liquidation of debts and mortgages of the poor farmers. It urged members to organize LSNR chapters in communities throughout the country and to build the *Liberator* as the official organ for the new organization.

Mary's speech was met with rousing cheers and a standing ovation. A national council was elected of which I was a member; Ben Amis was chosen national secretary. The Communist Party, through Earl Browder, pledged support in mobilizing white masses for the Black liberation struggle.

The meeting adjourned late on the night of November 19. We stood around the hall talking until about two in the morning. Ben Amis, Otto and myself left the hall with a Jewish couple who had put us up during the conference. They lived in a middle class white neighborhood and had driven us to and from the conference. Driving home, the conference successfully completed, we were all on top of the world.

The conference had been especially stimulating for me as it was the first I had attended since my return home.

We pulled up in an alley behind their home to put the car in their garage. Otto, Ben and I walked the short distance to the street and waited while they locked up. As we stood talking a squad car cruised by. Its occupants, four white plainclothesmen, were immediately suspicious of three Black guys coming out of an alley in white St. Louis in the middle of the night.

The squad car stopped and the four of them got out. One of them hailed us, "What are you niggers doing here?"

"We're waiting for our friends; we're delegates from a convention. Our friends are putting away their car; we're staying with them," Ben replied.

We were under a big street light and I could see the cops' faces as they stared hostilely at us. Fortunately at that moment our friends came up. They sized up the situation immediately and intervened for us. They explained we were their friends—they even showed the convention badges we all had. "We live just around the corner; they're staying with us," they said.

The cop in charge seemed satisfied with the explanation and turned to his friends, saying, "Okay, let's go."

A little, mean-eyed cop standing next to Otto seemed disappointed at this turn of events, that he would be deprived of the pleasure of shooting or beating up niggers. I figured him as one of those kind that carved notches on his gun for the Blacks he had killed. Looking at Otto he said, "This nigger here seems like a bad nigger to me; you're a bad nigger, ain'tcha?"

I was standing right next to Otto and knowing his temper, I kept pulling on his sleeve. Otto muttered something like, "Oh, not so bad."

"Yes, you are, you're a bad nigger," the cop responded, trying to bait him. But the head cop urged his partners to leave. Reluctantly they all turned away and got back in their car.

The incident had a sobering effect, cutting through the euphoria of the evening and bringing us back to solid ground. It would have been ironic for us to be the first victims of the police brutality against which we had inveighed at the congress!

I returned to New York via Chicago, revisiting my aunts and sister. My Father, now living with a niece in Elgin, Illinois, came into the city to meet me. Age had caught up with him and his hair had grayed. He was still working as a janitor. I was glad to see him but I felt sad too—we had so little in common.

All he saw for Otto and me was trouble. He was still a Booker T. Washington man and he didn't think the issue of freedom could be forced. To fight would only cause us grief.

HARLEM AND YOKINEN: WHITE CHAUVINISM ON TRIAL

Back in New York I was temporarily assigned to the national office of the TUUL and put on its payroll. The position, as I remember, was a nominal one and most of my work was with the Negro Department of the Party's New York District, of which I was soon to become head. My salary was twenty-five dollars a week which, in those days, was quite adequate.

The twenty-five dollars was theoretical, however, for often there was not enough money in the till to pay the national office staff. In such cases, we would divide up what there was or if there was nothing, go without. There was no such thing as payment of back wages; if you missed one pay day that was it. It was all fair enough.

No Party functionary went hungry in New York—one could run up a bill at the restaurant on Union Square where the management was friendly to the Party. We were also invited to eat with different comrades. Several of us functionaries stayed for awhile in the town apartment of a comrade who lived in Croton-on-Hudson. We were never bothered by the problem of rent.

My associates in the district included Black comrades like Steve Kingston and Tom Truesdale, as well as Peters, a Hungarian who was organizational secretary, and Alberto Moreau, who was in charge of agit-prop. Jack Stachel was then in charge of the national TUUL office. Foster, the chairman, was still in jail for his part in the unemployment demonstration of March 6, 1930, as was Israel Amter, the district organizer of New York. Jack Johnstone and Alfred Wagenknecht, TUUL board members, were always on hand in the office.

New York was a strange city to me. Before my recent arrival from Moscow, I had been in the city only once. That was upon my return from France after the First World War. New York's Black community, Harlem, was different from what I had known on Chicago's Southside. Blacks in New York worked largely in service jobs as domestics and janitors, hotel, hospital and laundry workers, as railroad porters and dining car waiters. Some worked in light industry like the needle trades, but there were few Blacks in basic industry as in Chicago.

Harlem's ethnic composition included a large segment of West Indian immigrants. I found them to be the most militant section of the Black population. Racism, American-style, was a sharp contrast to the more subtle racism of the West Indies and the new immigrants reacted strongly. They drew on the West Indies' long tradition of anti-imperialist struggle, and it was no accident that they comprised a large proportion of our first revolutionary cadres.

The world's largest Black community, Harlem was recognized as the cultural capital of Black America. It was the home of the Black renaissance. Harlem was the stronghold of Black reformism and bourgeois nationalism—the NAACP and the Urban League had their national headquarters there. The Garvey movement was born there and remnants still survived all around Harlem.

I had always felt building a revolutionary movement, which meant building unity among Blacks and forging alliances with white workers, was more difficult here in New York than in an industrial center such as Chicago. But the crisis of the Depression had been sort of a catalyst. Unemployed Councils were built, uniting Blacks and whites, even in New York. There were marches on city hall and movements against evictions and police brutality. Branches of the LSNR were built in Harlem and Brooklyn. Harlem was soon to become a powerful center of the Black liberation movement.

Throughout the country the communist movement was growing among Blacks. Many hundreds were recruited directly into the Communist Party and thousands into mass organizations influenced by the Party; Unemployed Councils, trade unions, etc. This tremendous advance was accompanied, however, by a wave of racist manifestations and tendencies in the Party and mass organizations. This clearly reflected the stepped-up racist offensive of the employers, aimed directly at halting the growing unity and maintaining the division between Blacks and whites.

The mass entrance of Blacks into the revolutionary movement flushed out hitherto hidden areas of white chauvinism. For example, there was the situation in the needle trades where over 8,000 Blacks now worked. Some officials of that union—among them Party members—failed to support the special demands of the growing number of Blacks coming into the industry.

In some shops, Black workers received lower wages than whites for the same work. The shop committees in those places resisted pulling a strike on the issue of equal pay for equal work. Maude White, recently returned from three years' study in the Soviet Union, was assigned head of the Needle Trades Union department. She was shocked by this flagrant violation of TUUL principles and even more so by the complacency of union leaders, among whom were a number of comrades.

But white supremacist attitudes in their crudest form had cropped up in a number of the language clubs and cooperatives. These often resulted in outright discrimination against Blacks. The language clubs (ethnic organizations of nationalities in the U.S.) had formerly been part of the language federations affiliated to the Party.

Since the late twenties as part of its bolshevization campaign, the Party had shifted to organizations based on the workplace and street branches and had cut out the language branches entirely.[2] Party fractions within the language clubs and cooperatives remained, however.

There was an incident at the Lithuanian cooperative restaurant in Chicago where comrades had refused to serve Black delegates to an unemployed conference meeting in the hall above. This was done on the plea that "it would hurt business" if Blacks were served. The restaurant workers suggested other places to eat and gave the Black delegates money for food. There was also a scandal in Gary where the Russian cooperative restaurant refused to hire Black workers.

But most recent was the incident in New York at the Finnish Hall in Harlem itself. The Finnish Hall had been established in an area originally settled by Finns in East Harlem around Fifth Avenue and 126th Street. Now this neighborhood was becoming predominantly Black, and the hall was being engulfed by the Black community. The hall had a pool room and gymnasium, and sponsored many cultural, sports and educational activities. One of its major attractions was the famous Finnish baths.

Several Black workers attended a dance at the Finnish Workers Hall. Instead of receiving the welcome they expected, they were pushed into a corner and barely escaped being ejected. The caretaker, August Yokinen, was a communist. When faced with the question of why he had not come to the aid of his Black comrades, Yokinen said he agreed with those who wanted to expel the Blacks.

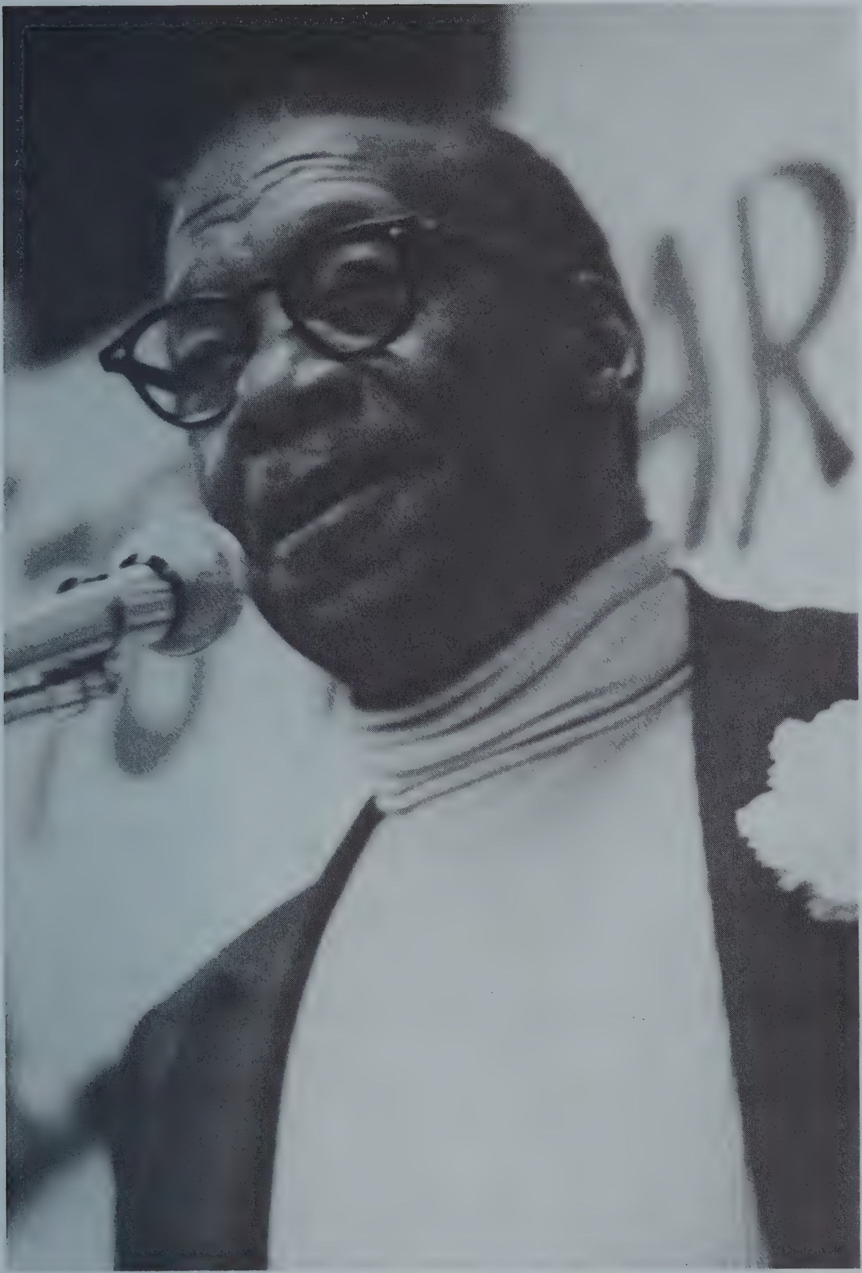
Apart from these flagrant manifestations of white supremacy, the white chauvinist resistance to work among Blacks took a more subtle and dangerous form. It was reflected in a tendency to regard the LSNR branches as a substitute for the Party in the field of Afro-American work. The practice was widespread on the part of local Party organizations to refer all issues concerning Blacks to the LSNR; to regard it as a sort of clearinghouse for this work, thereby absolving the Party from responsibility in this field.

The list of white racist manifestations was long and growing; clearly a crisis in the Party's mass work was building up. Further advance required a renewed drive, a counter-offensive on the question. The Party's very existence as an effective revolutionary force was at stake.

The Party's Negro Commission—comprising the leading comrades in the work—was first to feel the pressure. Harlem was up in arms; complaints poured in from the districts. It was clear that something had to be done.

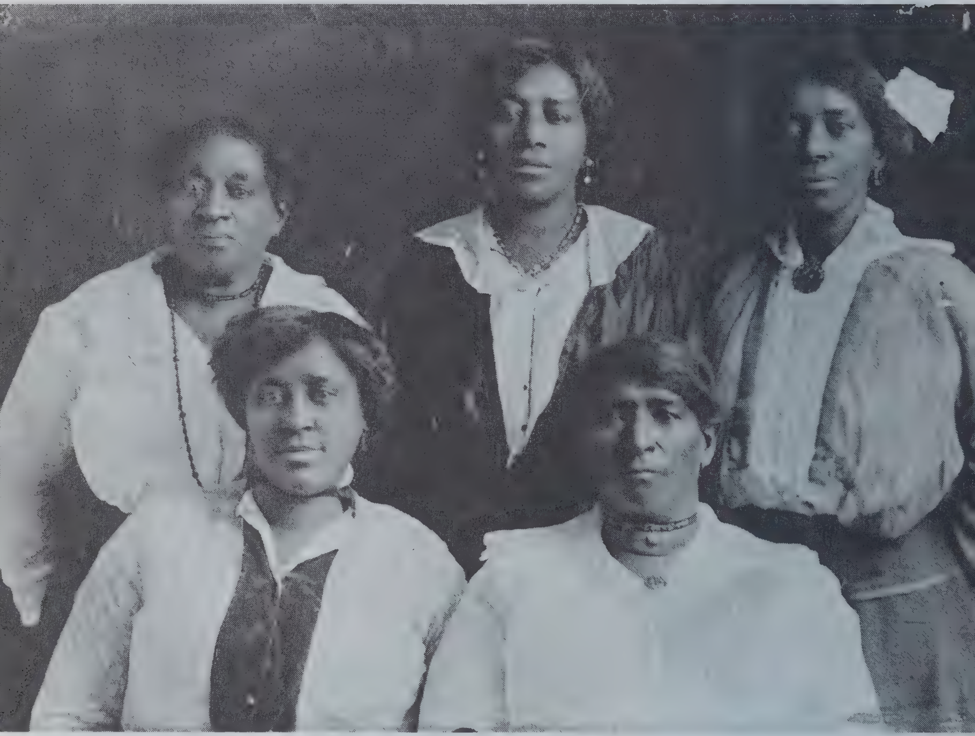
As a member of the Party's National Negro Commission, I felt much of this first hand, as did the other members of the commission. Our chairman was B.D. Amis, an articulate and aggressive man with considerable organizational ability. But he was relatively new in the Party and perhaps a bit unsure of himself in dealing with older, veteran revolutionaries.

He raised the question for the Politburo to intervene directly and push the districts to take a more aggressive stand against white



Vic Stuart

Harry Haywood, speaking at 78th birthday celebration, Chicago 1976

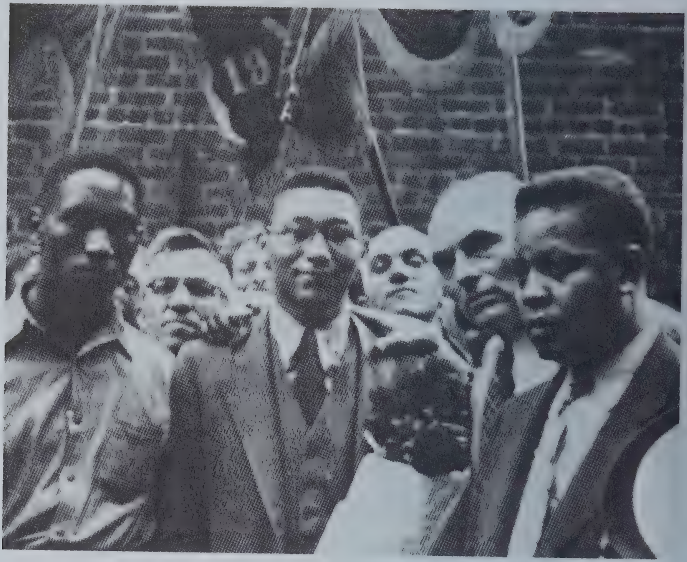


Harry Haywood's mother, Mrs. Harriet Thorpe Hall (above left), and four of her sisters

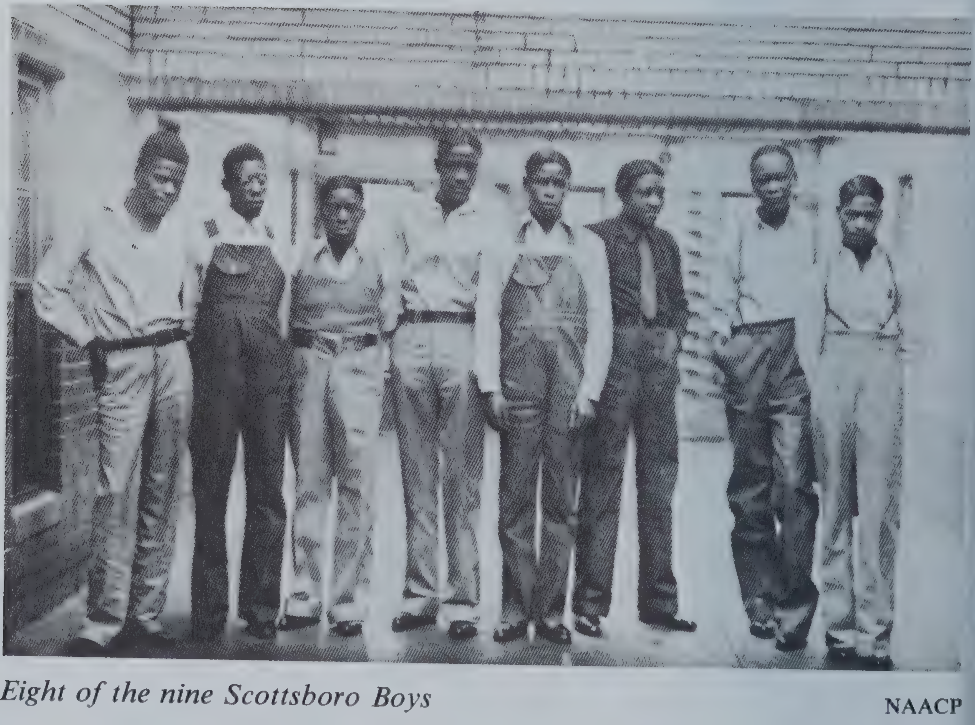
The "Hell Fighters" of the all-Black 369th Infantry, 93rd Division in World War I

National Archives

Sixty-four members of Black 24th Infantry court-martialed in 1917 by all-white tribunal on charges of mutiny and murder

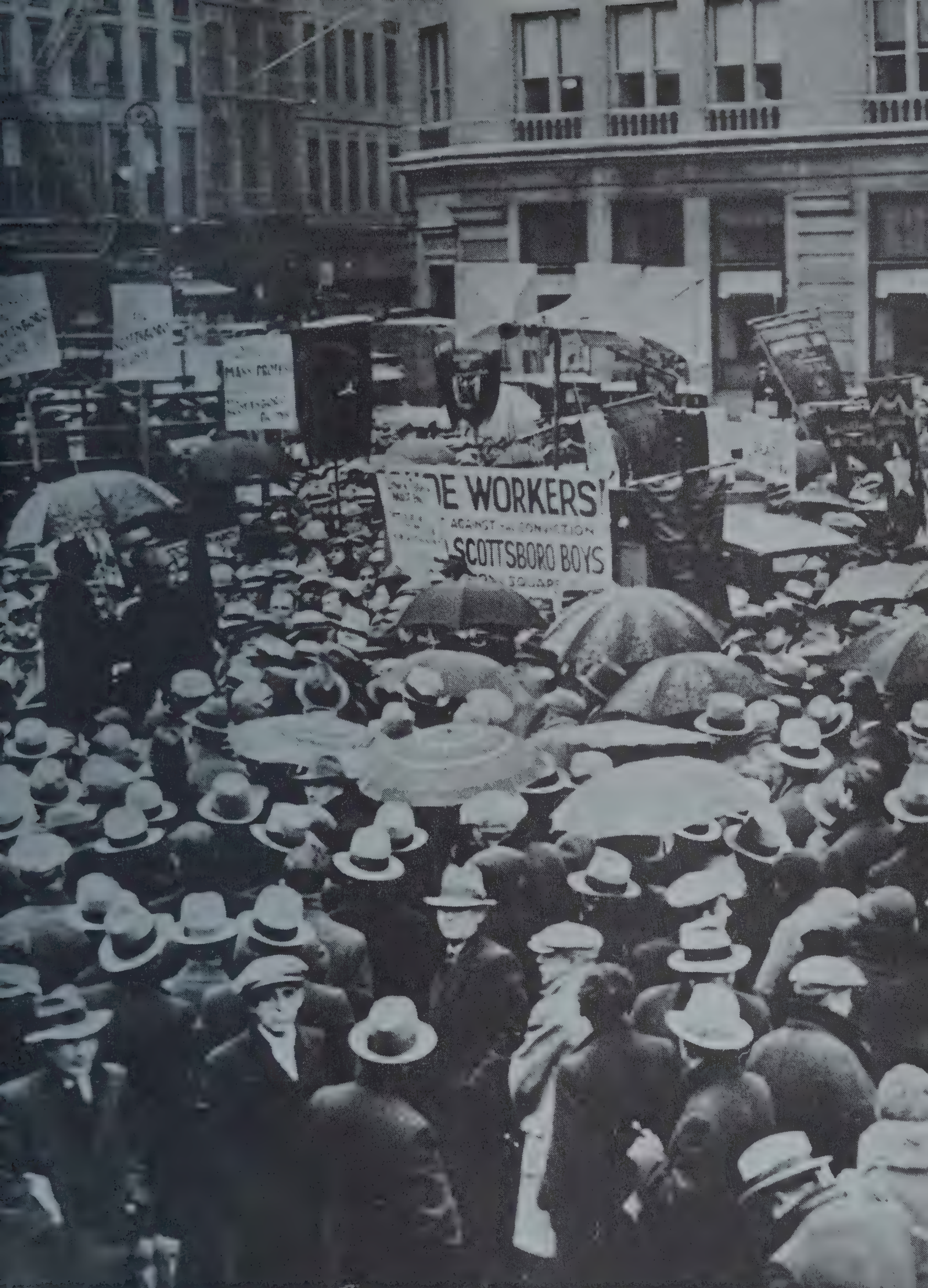


Victory in Angelo Herndon case celebrated in New York. Herndon, center; Robert Minor and James Ford on Herndon's right

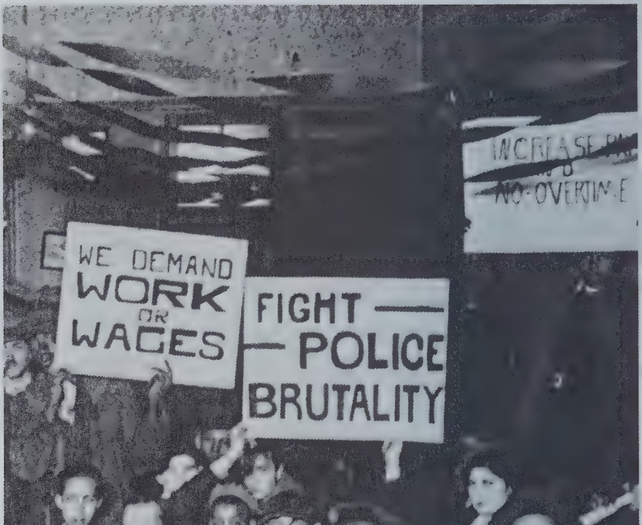


Eight of the nine Scottsboro Boys

NAACP


E WORKERS!
AGAINST CONVICTION
SCOTTSBORO BOYS

Large communist-led demonstration in support of Scottsboro Boys, December 9, 1933, New York City


INCREASE PA
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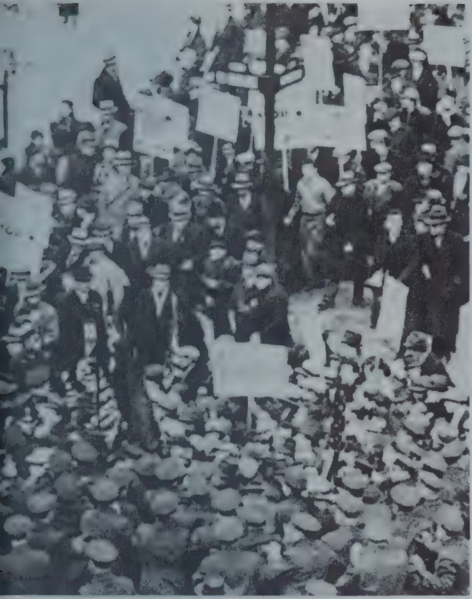
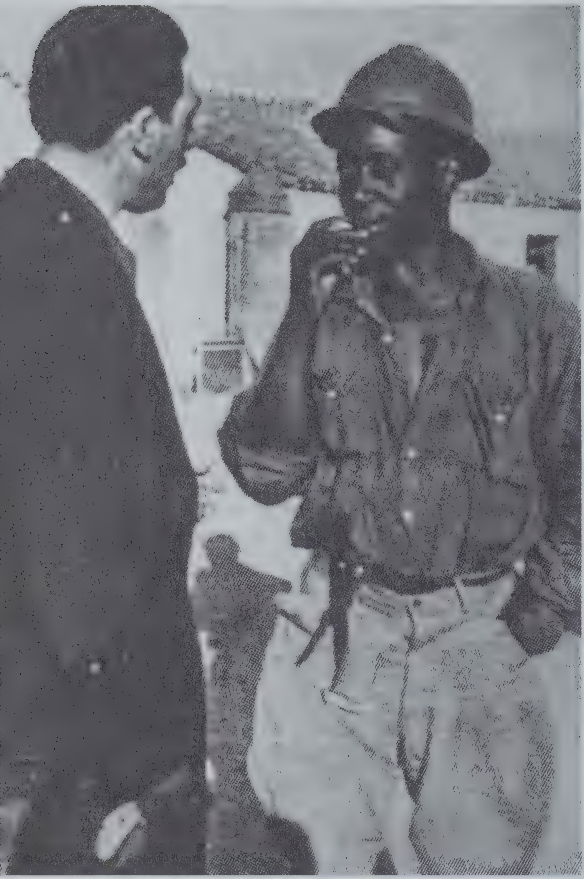
Library of Congress

Mass meeting of the International Labor Defense, which organized thousands of people in support of Scottsboro Boys, Sacco and Vanzetti, and other frame-up victims



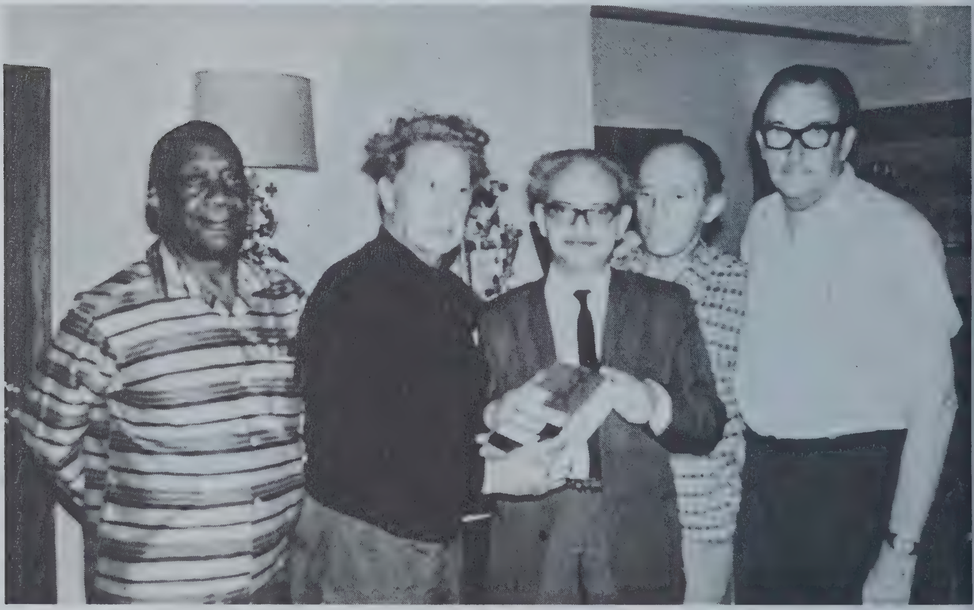
Left, New York City police attacking peaceful rally of 8,000 jobless workers, February 15, 1936

Below, unemployed workers in Cleveland, Ohio, receiving daily allotment of oranges, May 1938



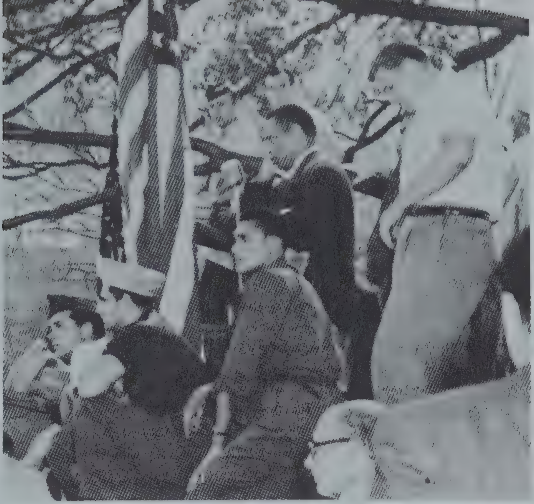
Left, Harry Haywood with French journalist Léon Mousinac during Spanish Civil War

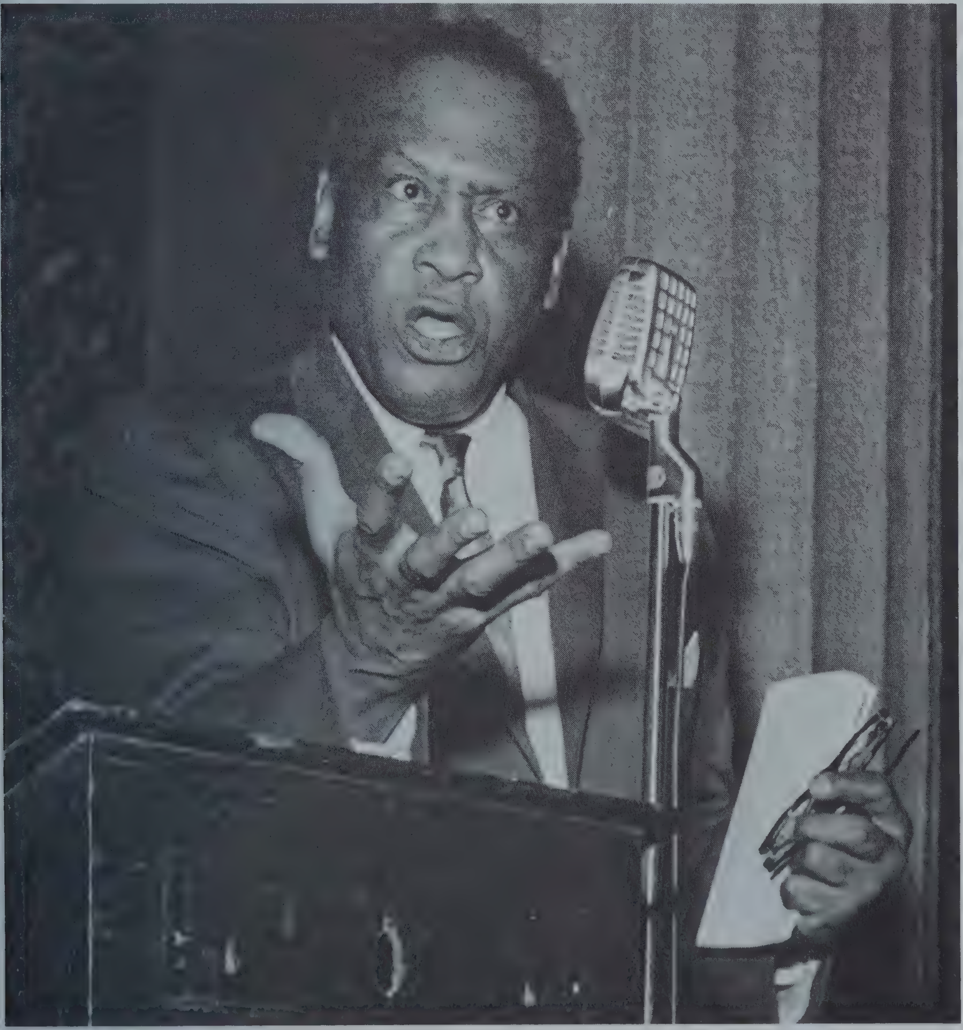
Below, 1967 reunion of veterans of Spanish Civil War in Mexico. From left: Haywood, David Siqueiros, Louis Crane, Judson Briggs and Bill Miller



Above, Paul Robeson surrounded by body guards while singing anti-fascist songs in Peekskill, N.Y., 1949

Below, Paul Robeson at 60th Birthday Celebration, Chicago





Syd Harris

ROOSEVELT
VETS BONUS
MEMORIAM
REPEAL VICIOUS ECONOMY AC

Communist-led May Day demonstrations. Above, 1935; below, 1934; opposite page, 1930 THE BETTMANN ARCHIVE

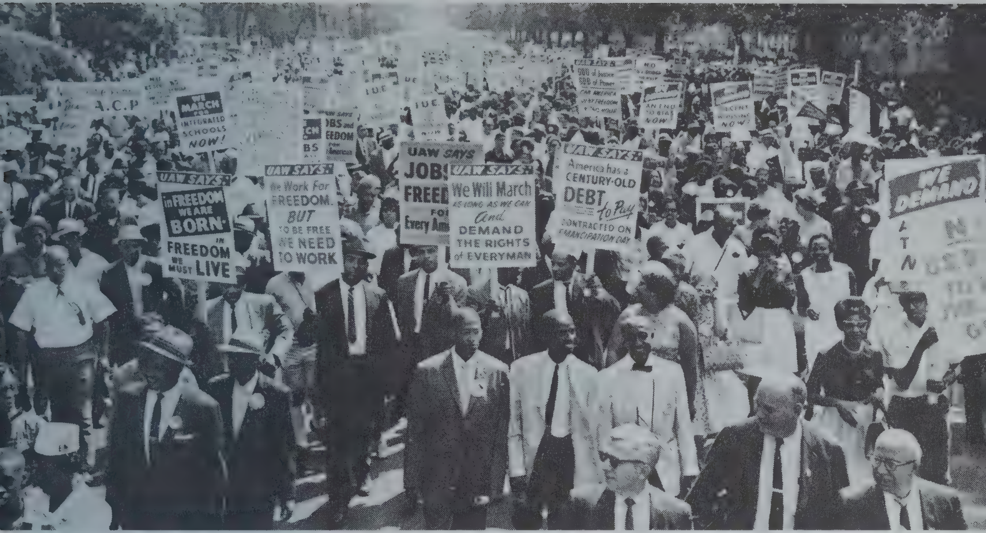
WE PLEDGE NOT TO SUPPORT THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES IN ANY WAR IT MAY CONDUCT
CCNY DAY CHAPTER NSL
NATIO
ECUT

RUTGERS SQ. 12
E. 15 ST.
CO-OPERATIVE CAFE
for Democracy
SOVIET UNION
to be misused
AMNESTY

THE BETTMANN ARCHIVE

William Z. Foster, former general secretary and chairman of the Communist Party

National leadership of CPUSA prior to 1957 national convention. From left: James E. Jackson, Eugene Dennis, Max Weiss, Ben Davis (in rear), John Gates, Claude Lightfoot, Sid Stein, Carl Winter, and Fred Fine


WE MARCH FOR INTEGRATED SCHOOLS NOW!
UAW SAYS: In FREEDOM WE ARE BORN IN FREEDOM WE MUST LIVE
UAW SAYS: We Work For FREEDOM. BUT TO BE FREE WE NEED TO WORK
UAW SAYS JOBS FREED FOR Every Am
UAW SAYS: We Will March AS LONG AS WE CAN And DEMAND THE RIGHTS of EVERYMAN
UAW SAYS: America has a CENTURY-OLD DEBT to Pay CONTRACTED ON EMANCIPATION DAY
WE DEMAND

Massive Civil Rights march in Washington, D.C., September 28, 1963. "Following this event, mass rejection of peaceful democratic integration became apparent in the growing wave of ghetto rebellions."

Hsinhua News Agency

Historic meeting of Black liberation leaders, W.E.B. and Shirley Graham Dubois, with Mao Tsetung, chairman of the Communist Party of China, October 1, 1962

Inge Hardison

Haywood and wife, Gwen, with newborn son, Haywood, Jr.

Vic Stuart

Harry Haywood visits with Al Murphy, former secretary of the Alabama Sharecroppers Union, 1977 supremacy. But Amis made no headway with the Politburo. Briggs, Maude White and I then drew up a document listing the various incidents of white chauvinism; we demanded the Politburo take decisive action. We presented our document at a Politburo meeting in January.

Present at the meeting were Earl Browder, B. D. Amis, Rose Wortis, Clarence Hathaway (then editor of the *Daily Worker*) and others. Briggs and I spoke first. Briggs was sore as hell—so angry that his usual stutter disappeared. Maude spoke last, dealing with the needle trades situation and resistance to the demands of the Black workers. She became so emotionally upset she burst into tears and asked to be relieved of her responsibilities in the needle trades unless she were given more support.

An awkward silence settled over the room at Maude's outburst. After what seemed an interminable time, Browder broke the silence—though I can't recall what he said. Hathaway spoke up, calling for some dramatic action to help resolve the crisis. He proposed a public trial of those involved in the incident at the Finnish Hall. His proposal was seized upon immediately as something concrete. A committee was set up to work with the district in organizing such a trial, including Hathaway, Amis and myself as members.

A renewed campaign throughout the Party against white chauvinism and for unity of Black and white workers got underway as a result of this meeting. A campaign of enlightenment resulted which was tied to organizational and disciplinary measures against those guilty of racist acts. A number of expulsions took place. Resolutions were adopted in all districts summarizing the results of the campaign. For example the February 19, 1931, *Daily Worker* carried a resolution of the New York District Bureau, "Close Ranks Against Chauvinist Influences."

A number of hard-hitting articles were also published in the Party press, including that of the language groups. This was all tied to the mobilization for the Yokinen trial scheduled for March 1; it was also made part of the National Day of Action of Unemployed on February 25, when marches on state capitals were scheduled.

Our committee for the trial held a meeting with the communist fraction of the Finnish Club with Yokinen present. The members were self-critical and agreed that they had acted wrongly in not throwing out the racist elements at the dance. But Yokinen not only justified his position, he even carried it further and argued that if Blacks were allowed to enter the club and pool room, they would soon be coming into the bath. And he for one did not want to bathe with Blacks.

The Yokinen trial took place on Sunday afternoon March 1, 1931, in the New Harlem Casino at 116th Street and Lenox Avenue, the very heart of Harlem.

That morning I attended a meeting of the steering committee responsible to the New York District for the conduct of the trial. Tight organization was required because the entire trial was to take place in less than four hours that afternoon. The trial had received wide publicity in both the bourgeois press and the Black press. Our plans called for Wagenknecht, national TUUL organizer and unemployed leader, to be chairman and judge. Clarence Hathaway would try the case for the Party. Attorney for the defense would be Richard B. Moore, head of the Negro Department of the ILD.

I arrived at the New Harlem Casino early. It was a large hall where dances were usually held, but it was already crowded. Over two thousand people jammed the hall, most went without seats. Hundreds of Blacks, including women with babies in their arms, were among them. Party workers moved up and down the aisles selling magazines and buttons. Banners around the room read, "Race Inferiority Is a White Ruling Class Lie! Smash Jim Crow Laws and Practices!"

Alfred Wagenknecht, a white-haired veteran revolutionary, called the court to order. Selection of a jury of fourteen, seven whites and seven Blacks, was then begun. Nominations were made and I was one of the jurors elected.

Hathaway, the prosecutor, stepped forward to present the case. He was a forceful speaker, emphasizing his points with his right hand which had several fingers missing, a legacy from his old machinist trade. In a lengthy address, often interrupted by applause, he described Yokinen's crime, outlined the communist position on the Afro-American question, and demanded Yokinen's expulsion for the crime of white chauvinism.

"Comrade Yokinen," declared Hathaway, "not only justified the hostility shown to the Negro workers who attended the dance, but he went even further. He claimed that if they were admitted to the club, they might go further and enter the pool room and even the bath house, and that he did not wish to bathe in the same tub used by Negroes.

"Comrade Yokinen made formal acceptance of the communist principle of equal rights, but he was not willing to accept its substance.

"The view Comrade Yokinen showed," Hathaway pointed out, "is the same view persistently put forth among the workers by capitalists. Everywhere, in church, in the press and in schools, you see this conscious effort to cultivate race prejudice. The capitalists know that if they can develop feeling against the Negro among the white workers they can oppress and exploit the Negroes and weaken the unity of Negro and white workers. The theories expressed by Comrade Yokinen play into the hands of the capitalist class and make him actually an agent of the bourgeoisie," Hathaway said.

"The Communist Party," he emphasized, "is committed to abolishing all customs which prevent Negroes from enjoying full equality with whites in every way."

The whole courtroom was attentive to Hathaway's presentation; their attention now turned to Richard Moore who spoke for the defense. The fine Black orator admitted the guilt of his client and that he had committed "a grievous crime." Moore further contended that Yokinen was not the only guilty person. He had realized the seriousness of his offense and now wanted to correct his errors in practice.

"It is the vicious bourgeois system, the damnable capitalist system which preaches corruption and discrimination which is the real criminal," Moore shouted. "Middle class opportunism permeated the mind of Yokinen and caused him to object to Negroes using the club for fear white people would stay away and the club would suffer economically."

Moore continued, "Let us not yell for the blood of Yokinen, but examine ourselves and see how far we have contributed to this thing of which Yokinen was guilty. We must not make a paschal lamb of Yokinen. We must win him back. Expulsion from the Communist Party is worse than death at the hands of the bourgeoisie."

The audience broke into loud cheers when Moore, with his hands clasped over his head, shouted, "I would rather my head be severed by the lynchers than to be expelled from the Communist International! We must not destroy Comrade Yokinen," pleaded Moore, "We must save him for the communist movement." Moore's plea was greeted by prolonged applause.

Yokinen submitted a full confession, reading it in Finnish. He admitted to having been influenced by white chauvinism, the ideology of imperialism.

"I refute and condemn my previous attitude...I want to prove in action that I no more have the slightest white chauvinistic tendencies. I ask this workers' court not to deprive me of the opportunity to further carry on my activity for the Communist Party and for the working class."

Our jury then retired to return half an hour later with the verdict. Thomas Mitchell, the Black foreman, announced the verdict. Yokinen was guilty. He should be forthwith expelled from the Party, but might be readmitted after he had expiated his crime and proved his worthiness by the performance of a number of tasks.

These were as follows: 1) To go immediately to the Finnish Hall, call a mass meeting and give a report of the trial, couched in such terms as to destroy white chauvinistic tendencies in the club; 2) To carry on in the club a persistent struggle for the admittance of Black workers and the granting to them of full privileges, including use of the poolroom, bathhouse and restaurant; 3) To join the LSNR and sell an adequate number of copies of the *Liberator*; 4) To lead a demonstration against a certain Harlem restaurant which barred Blacks; and 5) To take a leading part in all the movements and activities aimed at doing away with discrimination of any sort against Blacks.

After it had all been explained to Yokinen in Finnish, he solemnly nodded his head and said, "I will do it, I did wrong at the club."

The trial ended with the audience singing the "Internationale," clenched fists held high.

As I watched the crowd swarm from the hall it dawned on me that I had witnessed and participated in a historic event in the battle for Black rights. The impact of the trial was tremendous throughout the country. The most important newspapers carried full stories and photos of the proceedings.[3] The trial represented a breakthrough in understanding the importance of the struggle of the Afro-American people. It was the first time the revolutionary movement clearly and openly declared war on this pillar of American imperialism.

As for Yokinen, he conscientiously carried out his pledge made to the workers' court. He became a familiar and popular figure on the streets of Harlem, in demonstrations of the unemployed, for the Scottsboro boys and against the Jim Crow policies of a local cafeteria. After six months, he was readmitted to the Party as one of the staunchest fighters for our program.

These activities of Yokinen, including his attitude at the trial, evoked the wrath of the racist government and its Immigration Department, and finally resulted in his deportation. Although in the country thirteen years, Yokinen had never taken out U.S. citizenship and faced deportation proceedings on charges of belonging to the Communist Party. We were all surprised to hear that he was arrested by immigration inspectors the day after his trial. The International Labor Defense carried on a campaign on his behalf which failed to prevent his deportation several months later.[4]

The Yokinen trial was a significant turning point in the Party's work and came as the culmination of a long period of ideological struggle over the line of the Sixth Congress. I always felt that it had a cleansing effect on the Party—heightened the consciousness of the cadre and cleared the deck, so to speak, of the most blatantly chauvinist practices within the Party. The trial was a living political demonstration of our program on the Afro-American question and had tremendous repercussions on the Black liberation front as a whole—for the first time, the Communist Party was seen by the broad masses of Blacks as a serious contender for hegemony of the movement.

Thus, the basis was laid for our revolutionary leadership in the great battles of the thirties. It was directly as a result of the campaign around the Yokinen trial that the Party was able to take up the case of the Scottsboro Boys and build it into a great international movement. Hundreds of thousands of people were mobilized in a militant struggle against one of the cornerstones of capitalist oppression of Blacks—the institution of lynching.

SCOTTSBORO

I followed the Scottsboro issue closely from the beginning. On March 25, 1931, a freight train crowded with young people hoboing from Chattanooga to Memphis in search of work, passed through Paint Rock, Alabama. Nine Black youths were pulled off by the local sheriff and his deputies, charged with raping two white girls who happened to be riding the same freight train. The nine were: Charles Weems, age twenty; Clarence Norris, nineteen; Haywood Patterson, seventeen; Ozie Powell, fourteen; Eugene Williams, thirteen; Olen Montgomery, seventeen; Andy Wright, eighteen; Willie Roberson, fifteen; and Roy Wright, thirteen.

The situation was made to order for the local henchmen of Alabama's ruling oligarchy. The economic crisis had struck deeply into the entire region of northern Alabama, an area of mainly small, family-size farms and a few textile mills. Many in its largely white population were facing evictions and repossession of tools and livestock by the banks. In the textile mills, lay-offs were throwing many out of work. But the sizable Black population in the area suffered even greater hardships.

Moving with lightning speed, the local authorities of Paint Rock lost no time in exploiting the case. The boys were taken to Scottsboro (the county seat), where they were arraigned, indicted, tried and found guilty of rape in a period of less than three weeks.

The trial began on April sixth and ended on the tenth, with the sentencing of eight boys to death in the electric chair. The case of the ninth victim, Roy Wright, was declared a mistrial. The prosecution had requested life imprisonment in view of his youth (he was thirteen), but the jury returned deadlocked with seven jurors insisting on the death penalty.[5]

The trial was carried through in a lynch atmosphere. On the day it opened, mobs of white natives from the surrounding countryside and towns surged around the courthouse. A band was playing "There'll Be A Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight." The National Guard had been called out, ostensibly to preserve order and prevent the mob from attacking the boys. One of the youths, however, was bayonetted by a guardsman.

It was the new style, legal lynching carried through with the cooperation of the courts and law enforcement agencies. It was intended to guarantee to the mob the same results as would be obtained in an old-fashioned burning and hanging in a public square—the death of the victims.

The courtroom farce at Scottsboro was a part of a wave of racist terror sweeping the South which had resulted in ten known lynchings in the past three months. Clearly its purpose was to "keep the nigger in his place," to prevent unity of Blacks and poor whites; in other words, to divert the unrest of Black and white workers into channels of interracial strife.

This aim received open and brutal expression by the governor of Texas, Ross Sterling, an arrogant spokesman of the racist rulers of the South. Speaking of a case in his state, he stated, "It may be that this boy is innocent. But it is sometimes necessary to burn down a house in order to save a village."[6]

The Chattanooga Negro Ministers' Alliance retained Stephen R. Roddy, reportedly a member of the Ku Klux Klan, as defense attorney. His defense amounted to little more than pleading for life imprisonment instead of the death penalty. The NAACP kept a low profile on the case as they were not sure the boys were innocent and they wanted to avoid the possibility of the association being identified with mass rapists. This was their official justification for holding back from the case.

> *The N.A.A.C.P. is not an organization to defend Black criminals. We are not in the field to condone rape, murder and theft because it is done by Black men...*When we hear that eight colored men have raped two white girls in Alabama, we are not first in the field to defend them. If they are guilty and have a fair trial the case is none of our business.[7]

It was only when confronted with the dispatch of the ILD and the communists in taking up the case, and with the widespread outcry against the legal lynching in all sections of the Black population, that the NAACP belatedly tried to enter the case and force the communists out.

We communists viewed the case in much broader, class terms. First, we assumed the boys were innocent—victims of a typical racist frame-up. Second, it was a lynchers' court—no one, innocent or guilty, could have a fair trial in such a situation. From the beginning we called for mass protest against the social crime being acted out by Wall Street's Bourbon henchmen in the South. On April 2, the *Daily Worker* called for protests to free the Boys. Again on April 4, the *Southern Worker* carried an article that characterized the case as a crude frame-up.

I remember distinctly how I became involved in the case. I was sitting in the Party's district office on Twelfth Street. I had been reading the newspapers which were filled with stories of the trial in Scottsboro. It seemed things were going badly there. The first group of boys had already been sentenced to death in the electric chair. I was trying to figure out what our next step should be. It was clear that if we did not take over the defense of at least some of the boys, they were doomed. Suddenly Sol Harper burst in on me.

If there was one person who, before anyone else, understood the significance of the Scottsboro case and what the role of the Party should be, it was Sol. Sol Harper was a tall, rangy, stoop-shouldered Black comrade about thirty-five at the time, with prematurely graying hair. He combined the qualities of a dedicated communist with the skills of an expert investigative reporter. He seemed to have an inexhaustible store of information about current issues and knew everything that was happening or was about to happen on the Black rights front. He always carried a brief case stuffed with clippings from current newspapers and magazines. When I first arrived in New York it was Sol who guided me through Harlem, explaining what was happening on the streets and introducing me to countless people. One always felt that Sol had his finger on the pulse of the people. He knew what they were thinking and how they would respond to any event.

I had never seen him so agitated as he was that morning. "What's the Party going to do?" he demanded. The NAACP was selling these boys out, they were going to the chair, and the Black community was up in arms. "We have to step in now," Sol declared, "We must take over the legal defense. Send our lawyers down and get them to line up the boys and their parents."

Sol got through to me that it was time for a decision. As soon as he left I went up to the national office on the ninth floor of the building to talk with Amis and enlisted his support. Together we went to see Bob Minor in the next office. Bob had just been released from prison after serving one year for his leadership in the March 6 Union Square demonstration against unemployment and for relief.

Bob was keenly sensitive on the Afro-American question and saw "the great mass of Negro people" as one of the greatest and most effecive forces for the revolutionary overturn in the United States. He had just finished reading the accounts of the trial and had arrived at the same conclusion we had: the Party had to move in on the legal defense.

The three of us went to speak with Browder. He too had been reading about the trial and had just received a first hand report from Scottsboro where the legal lynching was taking place. Browder agreed that we must act quickly.

We immediately called a meeting with the ILD and the decision to enter the case was made. the ILD moved with dispatch. Joseph Brodsky, chief lawyer for the organization, and his associate, Irving Schwab, went immediately to Birmingham and Chattanooga where they got the consent of the parents and boys to enter the defense. Allen Taub, another ILD attorney who was already in Chattanooga, engaged the services of a local lawyer, George W.

Chamlee.

The ILD had now gained control of the case. On April 10, 1933, the day of the sentencing, the Central Committee issued a statement in the *Daily Worker* exposing the case as a "court house lynching" being carried out by the "Southern white ruling class." It called upon "all working class and Negro organizations to adopt strong resolutions of protest and to wire these to the Governor of Alabama." But wires to such capitalist officials alone, it went on to say, "will do no good; you must organize such at greatest possible speed mass meetings and militant mass demonstrations against this crime."

The statement concluded with the call to build a united front of "all working people and farming masses of this country" and put forward the slogans, "Death penalty for lynchers!" and "Stop the legal lynching at Scottsboro!"

On May 23, Bob Minor, Amis and I left New York to attend the All-Southern Scottsboro Defense Conference which was to meet on May 24 in Chattanooga. Minor represented the Communist Party, Amis spoke as Secretary of the LSNR, and I represented the TUUL.

Upon arrival in Chattanooga, we met with local comrades and Tom Johnson, the Party's Southern organizer. The four of us formed a steering committee for the conference and set up a command post in the home of a local Black comrade. Tom gave us the run down on preparations and expectations for the conference.

The atmosphere was tense. Local newspapers had sought to whip up hostility against the meeting, screaming with protests against the new carpetbag invasion from the north. The chief of police assured the white community that his forces were alerted and would take action against any attempt to disrupt the racist status quo.

Tom was not even sure that the conference would be allowed to meet. We learned that police harassment had prevented the arrival of the Alabama delegation; most of them had been picked up by Birmingham police as they were getting into assembled cars to drive to the conference. Since it was early morning, before sunrise, they were charged with a violation of the Birmingham curfew laws.

They were later released without fines, but too late to attend the conference. I was disappointed for I had expected my brother Otto would be part of the Alabama delegation.

Our fear that the police might try to disrupt the conference by arresting its leaders was well grounded. We adopted security measures to prevent this. All of us on the steering committee took turns going to the conference hall one person at a time. When one returned another would go. We adhered to this plan throughout the conference so that the whole steering committee was never present in the hall at any one time.

It was at this conference that I met Angelo Herndon for the first time. Herndon was to become the victim of a frame-up in Atlanta just a year later. I remember the enthusiasm and militancy of the two hundred delegates, especially of the local people. Other delegates told me that when Amis spoke he brought people to their feet as he called on Blacks everywhere to fight for the lives of the nine Scottsboro Boys. In this spirit, he invoked the memory of Nat Turner, Frederick Douglass and other heroes in the days of slavery. Bob Minor, as I understand, also gave an impressive speech. I too spoke, delivering greetings and support from the TUUL.

The conference ended without incident. We were all enthusiastic—it was the first conference against lynching to be held in the South. Bob, Ben, Tom and I were exhilarated and dropped our security precautions prematurely. We walked down to the conference hall and stood talking on the sidewalk, less than a block away from the conference. As we stood watching the delegates leave we congratulated each other on the success of the conference. A patrol wagon swooped down upon us and the four of us were arrested and charged with "blocking the sidewalk." We spent the night in jail and next morning Chamlee, our Scottsboro attorney, got us out with a ten dollar fine each.

Chapter 13

Class Warfare in the Mines

In June 1931, the TUUL sent me to Pittsburgh to work as an organizer in a strike led by the National Miners Union (NMU), a TUUL affiliate. It was the largest strike the TUUL had led up to that point and involved some 42,000 coal miners in the Pittsburgh area (eastern Ohio, northern West Virginia and western Pennsylvania), 6,000 of whom were Blacks. This strike was a part of the whole upsurge of working class activity led by the Communist Party during this period.[1]

The NMU was founded in 1928 by members of the rank-and-file Save-the-Union Committee of the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA). John Watt was elected president, William Boyce vice-president, and Pat Toohey secretary-treasurer. When the TUUL was formed in 1929, the NMU affiliated with the new revolutionary labor organization.

Its founding immediately followed the defeat of the UMWA in the bituminous coal strike of 1927, the result of the reactionary policies of John L. Lewis. After a strike which lasted over a year and despite the efforts of the Save-the-Union Committee, Lewis signed a separate agreement for the Illinois district. This move left the men in the Pittsburgh area with nothing to do but go back to work.

Almost overnight all the gains of the past thirty years of bitter struggle against the mine operators had been wiped out. Splits and dual unions developed throughout the mine fields where the union had once been strong. Conditions of the miners deteriorated very rapidly.[2]

Upon arriving in Pittsburgh, I proceeded immediately to the Yugoslav Hall where a meeting of the Central Strike Committee was proceeding. Representatives from all fields had assembled to vote on the strike and issue the general strike call. Foster, Jack Johnstone, Alfred Wagenknecht and Jack Stachel, from the national TUUL office, were all there and all spoke. But most impressive to me were the speeches of the organizers from the coal fields.

Ike Hawkins, veteran Black miner whom I had met as a delegate to the Fifth RILU Congress, and Tom Meyerscough, who had made the "cold turkey" speech at the American Commission of the Comintern in early 1929, spoke of the miserable conditions in the coal fields and the determination of the miners to fight back. It was a fight for survival dramatically reflected in the strike slogan "Fight Against Starvation!" To this the miners added another, "As Well Starve Fighting as to Starve Working in the Mines!"

I was assigned as union organizer to the Pricedale region, about thirty miles south of Pittsburgh. The region included some of the largest mines of the Pittsburgh Coal Company, the biggest of all the coal companies. I arrived in town on a late Sunday afternoon in the midst of a big open air meeting. It seemed that the whole town had turned out. I was delighted to find my friend Bill Dunne there.

He had arrived that morning and was one of the few leaders whom I had not seen at the Central Strike Committee meeting in Pittsburgh. He had been sent on a tour of the fields to pep up the morale of the strikers. A veteran of the copper miners' struggles in Butte, Montana, and of the coal miners' strike in Illinois, he was a skilled orator who was able to speak authoritatively on the issues.

I, on the other hand, knew nothing of the mining industry. On the train down from Pittsburgh, I had carefully read the strike call, acquainted myself with the miners' vernacular and committed the demands to memory. These included an increase in pay, the eight-hour day and recognition of the NMU.

I was introduced by Cutt Grant, the chairman of the local strike committee. I repeated verbatim what I had learned from the call and summarized the discussion of the strike committee in Pittsburgh. My remarks were on the whole well received. But I had quickly noticed that only a few Black miners were at the meeting. I had been informed that the Pricedale Mine had a large Black force. Where were they?

It seemed that while Blacks were the backbone of the strike in the immediate areas around Pittsburgh (Library, for example), they had not responded well to the strike in this region. I was later to learn from some Black miners that the probable cause for this was that Blacks around Pittsburgh had come up from the South earlier. They were older in the mines and had become fairly well integrated into the mine force. Many had obtained official posts in the NMU locals. This had its ironical side.

In many locals Blacks worked with recent European immigrants. In some places the latter were even the majority. But Blacks were elected to union positions—president, vice-president or secretary—because they were the only ones who could speak English! In Pricedale, however, Blacks had come into the mines later, most of them brought in as strikebreakers, as late as 1927.

Against this background, the difficulties that confronted me as a union leader in the area were obvious. I, a Black man, found myself the leader of a mass of white miners with strong racial prejudices. They didn't understand why the Blacks had not come out on strike. They seemed to expect that Black miners should forget about racist incidents that occured during the last strike, job discrimination in the mines and segregation in the company patches (areas where the mines built company-owned housing and company stores).

Cutt Grant, a slightly built wiry figure, was a strong and courageous fighter of many mine battles and a recognized rank-and-file leader. He was also afflicted with the white chauvinist illness. I remember how his face fell when I stepped on the platform and Bill Dunne introduced me as the NMU organizer. There was a sharp contrast between his enthusiastic introduction of Dunne and his apologetic tone in introducing me.

I must say, however, the attitude of the white miners was cordial and even friendly to me. I was a "Union Nigger" and therefore different from their Black fellow miners. But I overheard mutterings, "Why don't those damn niggers come out?" And I knew that they expected me to do something about getting them out. It was my first experience in such a situation.

There was a sizable number of South Slavs in the area, including Adam Getto, a young second generation American, who was the Party organizer. He immediately took me in tow, introduced me to his father, mother, aunts and cousins. While the elderly Slavs spoke little or no English, we were able to communicate as I spoke Russian to them and they spoke Croatian to me, a kindred Slav tongue.

I soon became known throughout the area as the Black Slav. It felt good to know I had some sort of a base—however tenuous—in the Yugoslav community, which included a sizable number of the miners in the area. The ethnic picture in my section included a minority of Anglo-Irish (old timers in the mines, many of whom had come from the South), a sizable number of South Slavs and the Blacks.

I became immersed in the work of the strike. Our immediate target was to close down the Pricedale Mine. Every day there were picket lines. Finally we called a special day. Every shop in the town closed; all the small merchants turned out for the picket line. The line was led by Cutt Grant, Getto and myself. The state police were also out in force.

They were a hardbitten lot—each looked like a one-man army with 30-30 Springfield rifles in their saddle holsters, .45 colts, long riot clubs and helmets. I sized them up as ex-Marines and former Army noncoms. As I passed by, I overheard the corporal say to one of his men, "See that nigger there—he's the union leader. Keep an eye on him!"—trying to scare me off.

In addition to the state police, there were the Coal and Iron Police, private cops employed by the coal companies. They carried on a campaign of terror in the company patches and around the mines. Just a few days before I arrived, they had smashed a picket line at Pricedale using tear gas, clubs and machine guns. Three miners were shot. It was the "worst rioting in Western

Pennsylvania bituminous fields in nine years."[3]

The Black miners were not responding to our organizing efforts, however, and the Pricedale Mine stayed open. It occurred to me that I might use the Scottsboro issue as a handle. I talked it over with Getto and Grant, suggesting that a meeting supporting the Scottsboro Defense be called jointly by the National Miners Union and the League of Struggle for Negro Rights. There was no LSNR in the field, but I felt that as national secretary, I had the authority to use the name.

I suggested we try to get hold of the ILD's famous Black orator, Richard B. Moore, who was touring the country on behalf of the Scottsboro Boys. I also suggested we issue a special leaflet to the Black miners, advertising the meeting, asking them to come out and hear the latest on the Scottsboro Boys. They agreed, and we put out a leaflet which also included the special demands of the Black miners against discrimination.

The meeting was held on a hot Sunday afternoon, under a large tree in Fairdale, a neighboring town where our strike headquarters were set up. Several thousand people—miners and their families—turned out, and for the first time Black faces were among them. It seemed the entire Black community had come out.

Richard B. Moore was at his best; he spoke for over two hours about the international situation, the crisis, unemployment, Scottsboro and the miners' strike. He linked them all up together and was frequently interrupted by applause, as his ideas struck home with the audience. He ended with a rousing plea for unity of Black and white miners in the strike. People were just spellbound.

Cutt Grant came over to me, eyes moist with emotion. He could hardly speak. "My! I've never heard a speaker like that before."

Moore's speech seemed to have purged Grant of his white chauvinism. I believe he joined the Party the next day, and the Black miners at Pricedale joined the strike.

MURDER IN THE COALFIELDS

Every weekend Getto and I would go to Pittsburgh to attend a

Central Strike Committee meeting. Often Cutt Grant would accompany us. Organizers from all the fields would be present. We'd get the latest news of the strike, how it was proceeding in other fields, report our own situation and receive new instructions. We would communicate this to the miners in our region on our return.

Returning one Monday morning, I crossed the bridge at Monessen, and was met by some miners from my section. "Have you heard what happened?" they said, rushing up to me.

They informed me that the company goons—the Coal and Iron Police—killed Filipovich right on his front porch, with his whole family watching.

I was shocked. Filipovich was an ex-miner who had become a small storekeeper. His store was right across the street from the Pricedale company patch. He and his wife and several children lived above the store and we had our miners' relief station in his basement. Everyone knew him as a strong partisan of the miners and he was well liked by all, except the company thugs who were out to get him.

We proceeded to Fairdale, but could only get within several blocks of the store. There were crowds of miners and their families milling around and I found out exactly what had happened. Filipovich and his family had been sitting on their porch the evening before when some company thugs had come out and fired point blank at him from the company patch across the street. He had jumped up and rushed his family through the door, shouting, "Don't kill the children!" It was then that he was shot, though none of his children were hurt.

The reaction was tremendous anger throughout the coalfields at this cold blooded murder. At the funeral, miners, their families and sympathizers gathered from all the coal fields around. A Yugoslav priest conducted the service and Adam Getto gave the eulogy.

The anger of the people was so strong, it was clear the operators couldn't get away with it this time. The state prosecutor was forced to try the case; the killers were found guilty and sentenced to long prison terms.

The last hold-out mines in our area were two near Bentlyville, Charleroi and Hillman. They were situated on a hill outside the town limits, just off a public highway. Everytime we had attempted to picket these mines, the coal and iron thugs would mount machine guns across the road, thus blocking our attempts to close them down. We all knew this crude violation of the rights of the miners could only take place with the collusion of the state police who were curiously absent on such occasions. Over several weeks we planned and organized for an attack to break through this blockade.

With the help of the Central Strike Committee, we mobilized miners from neighboring coal fields for a march on these mines. The morning of the march thousands of miners and their wives assembled at the foot of the hill leading up to the mines. The coal and iron thugs had placed across the road three machine guns, which glistened in the morning sun. Cutt Grant, Getto and myself were to lead the march.

While we were gathering, the state police, who had been conspicuously absent in past confrontations with gunmen, made their appearance in the person of a young lieutenant and a sergeant who drove up in a car.

Standing on the running board, the lieutenant warned us: "Don't march up that hill, you'll all be killed. Don't follow your leaders," he said, pointing at Adam, Cutt and me. "They are Russian communists, trying to lead you into a trap."

Voices from the crowd responded, "Isn't this a public road? What right have they to block it? Why don't you clear them off it? Let's march," they shouted. The crowd surged forth, with Cutt, Getto and myself in the lead.

"Here I am," I thought, "over the top again, but in another kind of war this time—against the enemy at home." No weapons, no artillery support; just militant and determined miners. Some had clubs, others picked up rocks, and a few, I'm sure, had handguns concealed under their coats, despite our efforts to discourage them. So we began the march slowly up the hill, expecting at any moment to be blown apart by the company thugs who now had the three machine guns pointing directly at us.

The atmosphere was tense with expectancy. We got about fifty feet from them, when they suddenly picked up their guns and moved them to the side of the road, back onto company property. It had all been a bluff. We surged past with a deafening "hurrah" and established our picket lines on the public road in front of the mines. Bentlyville mines were struck that day. Now, all the mines in our section were on strike. The mines were closed tight for several months, during which the miners had excellent morale and fighting spirit.

A back-to-work movement started slowly in the fourth month of the strike. At first, it was scarcely perceptible, but when more and more miners failed to show up at local strike committee meetings, it was clear that demoralization was setting in. Behind this was the stark fact of starvation for the miners and their families. The relief efforts headed by Wagenknecht were inadequate to maintain a long drawn-out strike.

Getto, an old hand in the minefields, warned me of what to expect. As the feeling that the strike is being lost grows, it is often accompanied by terroristic actions, particularly among the young miners—blowing up tipples, wrecking property and buildings.

We organizers and some of the more militant miners, however, were reluctant to admit defeat. At the beginning of the back-to-work movement, many rank-and-file leaders and even union organizers continued to give rosy reports at the Central Strike Committee meetings.

"Yes, a few scabs are crawling back, but the main mass of miners are solid in support of the strike."

Then the Comintern representative, the German Ewart, appeared at a meeting of the communist fraction of the strike committee.[4] As I recall, he kept insisting on exact information on the back-to-work movement. Clearly, he was suspicious of the glowing reports from many comrades. He stressed that if the trend was there and growing, that we must be prepared for a "strategic retreat."

Retreat! Such a word was strictly taboo. Some organizers looked at him as though he were a scab and argued, "That's just what the operators would like us to do!"

Even Foster seemed unfamiliar with the idea of voluntary retreat. The term was evidently not in his lexicon of strike strategy. If we are facing defeat, we should go down fighting—this seemed to be the common opinion. But Ewart quickly pointed out that if we chose this course, we would find all our militants outside of the mines, blacklisted, and our union destroyed.

On the other hand, if we recognized our defeat, understood that the miners simply could not stay out any longer, we would be able to keep our militants in the mines, prevent ourselves from becoming isolated, and regroup our forces to fight again. The logic of this position was unassailable and after several meetings we were won over.

We returned to the fields and called meetings of the strikers. The position made sense to them. But our action was not taken soon enough. Thousands of our best miners had already been locked out.

But the rank-and-file movement among miners did not end. Early in 1932, 8,000 miners in the Kentucky fields went out under the leadership of the NMU. This historic strike was carried out under conditions of guerrilla warfare. After bitter struggle, in which many were killed, this strike was also broken.

SUMMATION OF THE STRIKE

The twelve-week miners strike ended in a defeat for the workers. The failure of the Party, and especially Party leadership, to summarize the strike and thoroughly master the lessons learned from it, contributed to the demise of the NMU, a red trade union.

The strike was carried out at a time when the mining industry itself was in the throes of deep crisis, mass unemployment prevailed and starvation was an immediate reality for thousands of miners and class fighters. The economic crisis was nationwide but the mining regions of western Pennsylvania were particularly hard hit.

As a resolution of the ECCI summarized it, under these conditions the Party should have been feverishly working to prepare for the miners' strike, building local organizations of the Party and of the red trade unions.[5] Some effort was made in this direction immediately before the strike, but on the whole, the Party organization was in a weak and neglected state when the strike did break out.

This situation was aggravated by the fact that after the strike began, our leadership was unaware of the necessity and importance of strengthening, extending and building local Party and trade union organizations as the backbone of successful strike strategy.

Many leading comrades were brought in to aid in the struggle, but mainly the higher levels of the strike apparatus were strengthened, while the local levels were almost entirely neglected. Because the strike leadership did not make the building of local organizations an urgent priority, it did not realize that we were in danger of becoming isolated from the broad masses of strikers.

Underlying these mistakes was a lack of clarity on the basic line guiding the Party's work in this struggle. The key obstacle was the inability to link up the task of developing the Party with the no less urgent task of doing everything possible to win the miners' strike. Our work during the strike suffered from separating these tasks and emphasizing one at the expense of the other. Our main objective, simply put, was to revolutionize the striking miners—to show, by our actions in the strike, and through propaganda and agitation, that it is the communists who advocated and carried through the correct strike strategy and tactics.

Material success is not always possible in a strike and is not an absolute prerequisite for determining the success or failure of a strike. At the same time, it must never be forgotten that there can be no political success in a strike without a serious struggle for the material improvement of the strikers. The strike leadership did not see it was pursuing an entirely one-sided course when it insisted on "holding out to the last man."

The result of these errors was the failure of the strike committee to lead an orderly and well organized retreat. The strike committee was not linked closely enough with the miners in the fields. This close and intimate connection was one thing that would have enabled the leadership to take measures in sufficiently good time to prepare for the possibility of a strategic retreat. Instead, the leaders continued to listen to the optimistic and honey-coated reports of its traveling representatives and discouraged rank-and-file miners from expressing their doubts about continuing the strike by labeling all such miners as scabs. This existed to such an extent that the strike leadership did not even notice that at the end of the strike, we were "leading" a minority of the workers.

In the end, the miners simply could not stay out any longer because of the widespread starvation and police terror. The Party's refusal to organize for the possibility of a retreat left us isolated, and to a certain extent discredited. Thousands of the most militant and courageous fighters were locked out (blacklisted and evicted) by the coal operators. The NMU was decimated by the coal operators, and thenceforward, we were unable to build it into a powerful, independent union.

LEADING THE PARTY'S AFRO-AMERICAN WORK

I returned to New York from the miners' strike in September 1931. Shortly thereafter, I was coopted to the Central Committee with the privilege of sitting in on meetings of the Politburo. B.D. Amis, the former head of the Negro Department, was sent to Ohio and I was named to fill his position. In my new job, a large part of my time was devoted to the Scottsboro campaign, which was a major effort of the Party in the Black liberation struggle.

It is difficult to fully assess the tremendous impact Scottsboro had on the Party's political development in that period. Every area of work—every mass organization we were involved in—was strengthened by our participation in this defense campaign. Through our militant working class policy, we were able to win workers of all nationalities to take up the special demands of Black people embodied in the Scottsboro defense. I'll never forget how the immigrant workers in the Needle Trades Union would sing

"Scottsboro Boys Shall Not Die" in their various Eastern European and Yiddish accents.

In the South, the movement awakened the great mass of the Black peasantry and resulted in the building of the militant Sharecroppers Union, which embraced thousands of land-starved Black croppers and poor farmers. Scottsboro helped pave the way for the growth of the Unemployed Councils and the CIO. The International Labor Defense (ILD), which had been initiated by the Party in 1925 to fight for the freedom of political prisoners like Tom Mooney and Warren Billings, became the main mass organization in Scottsboro.[6] The Mooney case and others like it were linked to the Scottsboro frame-up and became instrumental in winning white workers to the fight for the freedom of the Scottsboro Boys.

Scottsboro marked the first real bid of the Party and the Black working class for leadership in the Black liberation struggle. Within the national movement, Black workers emerged as a force independent of the reformists and greatly strengthened by their role as part of the working class generally. By the end of 1931, we had effectively won hegemony in the defense efforts. Although the NAACP did not formally withdraw from the defense until January 1932, we were already in de facto control, the boys and their parents having signed up with the ILD.

The thrust of our policy, emphasizing the primacy of mass struggle for the freedom of the boys, had succeeded to a large extent in discrediting and isolating the reformist-liberal NAACP leadership. This fact, however, did not mean that the right reformist danger of compromise and capitulation in the Black freedom movement had been eliminated. On the contrary, its proponents continued to probe our positions seeking weak spots which they could exploit to stage a comeback.

Within the Party, these influences were reflected in the underestimation of the objective class role of the reformist leadership as an agency of the white ruling class within the Black movement. Underlying this was the tendency to ignore class differences in the Black community, the naive and anti-Marxist assumption that all Blacks as members of an oppressed nation were revolutionary or potentially so.

This attitude persisted despite the treachery of the NAACP leaders in the Scottsboro struggle. In practice, it was manifested in the tendency to rely on local Black leaders, particularly the clergy, in the building of local united fronts and the failure to involve the masses below. Often within these united fronts the Party failed to place elementary conditions for struggle against the ruling class as the basis for unity and thus failed to maintain the independent role of the Party, its freedom of action and propaganda.

This struggle against the right reformist danger was often made more difficult by left sectarian errors, manifested primarily in a resistance to building the broadest possible united front.

As head of the Negro Department, I felt it was my job to push the fight against reformism in the Black community and its reflections in the Party. This I felt was essential, not only to the Scottsboro struggle, but also to secure our long-term strategic objective, winning of the hegemony of Black workers in the liberation struggle. I pursued this line in speeches, lectures, in training classes for Party cadres, and in my writings during this period.[7]

In those days the South was considered the main concentration point for the development of the Black liberation movement. As head of the national Negro Department and Central Committee representative to the South, I was expected to follow closely the development of the Party's work in that region. It was therefore necessary to acquaint myself with its practical as well as theoretical problems. My plan was to spend at least three or four months a year in the South.

My first trip South was to Charlotte, North Carolina, in the spring of 1932. Charlotte, located near the foothills of the Piedmont, was the geographical center of the growing Southern textile industry. The industry had grown up as the result of the runaway shops from New England—bent on tapping the cheap labor supply of poverty-stricken white farmers fleeing the uplands. Gastonia, the scene of the historic strike in the spring of 1929, which had been led by the Party and TUUL, was only twenty miles from Charlotte.

Charlotte was also the headquarters of the Party's North Carolina District. At the time of my visit, it was quiet, but there were stirrings in the mills around the area, rumblings of a new wave of strikes which were to break out the following July. Unemployment was the main issue among both Black and white workers. Unemployment was growing as a result of the inhuman "stretch-out" (speed-up) system. Blacks were still a minority in the mills, working only in clean-up jobs, sweeping and janitorial work. They were the lowest of the low.

The Party had carried through some demonstrations for unemployment relief. Some of the stalwarts from the Gastonia strike who had been locked out of the mills had moved into Charlotte—providing the backbone of the Party in Charlotte, at least among whites. The Party had won sympathy among Blacks as a result of the Scottsboro issue and its strong position against discrimination in the shops. An ILD branch had been set up and there was a good Scottsboro movement in town.

The Party was partially underground, and its members worked in the Unemployed Councils, ILD and the National Textile Union (which had never really recovered after the Gastonia defeat). There was an unemployed headquarters downtown which consisted of an office and a fairly large hall where the ILD also held meetings. Party meetings were generally small and held in the homes of comrades.

Most of the top Party leadership was from the north. Richards, the district organizer, was of Finnish-American extraction and hailed from Wisconsin, where he had formerly been D.O. Amy Schecter was a Jewish cockney. Born in London, she was a college educated intellectual, but she still retained a thick cockney accent. She was one of the original Gastonia Seven who were charged with the murder of the chief of police. (Their case was finally won in the Supreme Court.) There was also Dave Doran of the YCL. He later became political commissar of the Lincoln Brigade and was killed on the Aragon front in Spain. The outstanding local comrade was a steadfast Black woman, Ann Withers.

My visit to Charlotte was brief. I sat in on a few meetings in the district, discussing preparations for marches on the issue of unemployment relief and the upcoming election campaign. I then returned to New York and reported on my visit.

Chapter 14

Reunion in Moscow

Nineteen thirty-two was a presidential election year. We communists greeted it as an opportunity to popularize our program before the millions of people impoverished by the economic crisis and ruling class offensive, as well as to stimulate and strengthen all the campaigns the Party was engaged in.

By this time, the Party had built considerable influence among the masses through an increasingly successful struggle against right dangers. We concentrated a good deal of attention on the struggle for unemployment insurance and immediate relief. Hunger marches on state capitals had taken place throughout the country, culminating with nationwide marches on Washington in December of 1931 and 1932.

In the struggle of employed workers, the Party found itself increasingly at loggerheads with William Green and the AFL. For instance, he supported Hoover's wage-cut policies against which we had waged many successful battles. In direct defiance of the AFL's no-strike pledge, the Party and the TUUL were leading strikes in the Kentucky mines and the needle trades.

Poor and middle farmers were then revolting against widespread evictions and foreclosures throughout the midwest, and in December 1932 farmers from across the country held a National Relief Conference in Washington. As a result, the Farmer's National Committee of Action was set up—raising such demands as no forced sales or evictions of poor farmers, cash relief, reduction in rents and taxes, and an end to the oppression of Afro-American people.[1]

With mass demonstrations and meetings throughout the country to free the Scottsboro Boys, the Party was becoming a respected leader among Blacks. We also helped organize the National Bonus March in July 1932. Some 25,000 veterans marched to Washington, demanding adjusted service pay; standing against the danger of imperialist war and for the defense of the Soviet Union and the Chinese people.

We began preparing for the presidential campaign early in 1932, nominating a national slate of William Z. Foster for president and James W. Ford for vice-president. Ford was called back from Germany where he had been chairman of the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers. I had been briefly considered for vice-president, but it was felt generally that my appearance was too youthful.

Though the Party's vote was small—about 103,000—we used the campaign to broadly publicize our minimum and maximum programs.[2] We had a slate of congressional candidates, among whom were many Blacks. The Party was on the ballot in forty states and conducted an aggressive campaign. Hundreds of mass meetings were held throughout the country, seven million leaflets distributed and one million pamphlets sold—all this in the face of vicious police harassment and repression. I don't really believe that the final vote was an accurate reflection of the Party's influence at that time—particularly in the South, where the Black masses were almost entirely disenfranchised.

In the summer of 1932, nineteen-year-old Angelo Herndon, a YCL member, was arrested in Atlanta, Georgia. Herndon was charged with "incitement to insurrection" under an old 1861 fugitive slave statute. Much of what I learned was from my brother Otto who was in Atlanta at the time and worked actively in the campaign.

That June, the Fulton County Commissioners had announced that there was no more money for relief. After all, there was no need for relief, they said—there was no one in the city of Atlanta who was starving. Then they invited any stray soul who might be hungry to come to their offices and they would investigate the situation.

The Communist Party and the Unemployed Councils immediately took them up on their offer. They mobilized 1,000 people—Black and white—to come to the county courthouse and demand relief. The meeting itself was historic—the first time that such a large meeting of Black and white workers had taken place in the South.

Herndon described its significance in his autobiography: "It was a demonstration of the Southern worker's power. Like a giant that had been lying asleep for a long time, he now began to stir."[3] Atlanta's ruling circles were appropriately alarmed and the next day they found $6,000 for relief.

One week later, Angelo Herndon was arrested. His trial was an example of Georgia lynch justice and the local rulers through their newspapers were to use it to sensationalize the "red Jew" scare for many years to come. I think the prosecutor's remarks sum up the situation pretty well.

Falling to his knees, the Reverend Hudson told the jury that he expected them to arrive at a verdict that would "automatically send this damnable anarchistic Bolsheviki to his death by electrocution." The good reverend said that this would satisfy God and the "daughters of the state officials can walk the streets safely. Stamp this thing out now with a conviction."[4]

Hudson didn't get everything he asked for, but Herndon was sentenced to eighteen to twenty years. Before he was sentenced, however, young Herndon told the court: "You may succeed in killing one, two, even a score of working-class organizers. But you cannot kill the working class."[5]

In the beginning stages of the case, the ILD had immediately taken charge of the defense, which was then in the hands of a young Black Atlanta attorney, Ben Davis, Jr. The case was linked up with the Scottsboro struggle as a symbol of the racist persecution of Blacks.

A long legal battle ensued. Mass meetings and huge petition campaigns were launched as part of the defense effort. The case was fought through to the Supreme Court, which at first sustained the conviction, but ultimately reversed it by a five to four decision. Herndon, out on bail, was finally freed in 1937.

As soon as we had received word of Herndon's arrest, we began planning a nationwide defense campaign. The Negro Department was responsible for developing and carrying out a campaign in support of the ILD. As part of this effort I made plans to go to Atlanta to see the situation first hand.

Shortly before I was to leave, however, Browder called me into his office and informed me that he had just received a CI request that the American Party send three delegates to attend the Twelfth Plenum of the Executive Committee of the Communist International. Browder asked if I would like to go; the meeting was to be in Moscow in early September. He said that he was aware of my desire to bring my wife Ina to the United States, and he suggested that this might be a good opportunity. I, of course, enthusiastically agreed. Just a few days later, I was aboard ship—bound for the Soviet Union—with the other two delegates, Bob Minor and Henry Puro (a Finnish-American comrade).

We arrived in Moscow in mid-August and I had a joyous reunion with Ina. Not long after our arrival, the Twelfth Plenum of the ECCI convened as scheduled. Its purpose was to analyse the current international situation and check the work of the Comintern sections, the affiliated parties.

The tone was set in the resolution on the international situation. It noted that capitalist stabilization had ended, that we were well along in the third period, and that although a revolutionary upsurge was developing in a number of countries, a revolutionary situation had not yet arisen in any important capitalist country. The resolution stressed the danger of war and the "preparation for a counter-revolutionary war against the USSR." The enemy, it declared, was both fascism and social-fascism (social democracy), which stood for the maintenance and strengthening of capitalism. "Only by directing the main blow against social democracy, this social mainstay of the bourgeoisie," it said, "will it be possible to strike at and defeat the chief class enemy of the proletariat—the bourgeoisie."[6]

In the United States there had already been mass demonstrations of the unemployed, the veterans' march and the strike struggles against wage cuts. The resolution called upon the U.S. Party to continue to strengthen its efforts in mobilizing the masses, and towards this end to "concentrate chiefly on the struggle: 1. for social insurance, against wage cuts, for immediate assistance for the unemployed; 2. for assistance for the ruined farmers; 3. for equal rights of the Negroes and the right of self-determination for the Black Belt." It urged the defense of the Chinese people against foreign aggression and defense of the Soviet Union.

There was nothing new in all this. The Party was in agreement with all these points and had taken part in discussions which led to the formulation of his speech.

I visited the Lenin School where I reported on the Afro-American work in the Party. The student body was completely new to me; there were a number of American Black students as well as several South Africans. One was Nzula, the secretary of the South African Communist Party, a brilliant young Zulu communist. Unfortunately Nzula died of pneumonia shortly after I left.

In Moscow I also met members of the Black and white film group who had come to the Soviet Union at the invitation of the *Mezhrabpom* (Soviet film industry). The twenty-two young men and women were there to film a story about race and class relations in the Southern United States. Among them were the novelist and poet Langston Hughes; Louise Thompson (now Louise Thompson Patterson), secretary of the Committee for the Defense of Political Prisoners and a former social worker and teacher; Ted Poston, a New York journalist; Loren Miller, a young west coast intellectual, later a lawyer and judge; and Henry Moon, a writer who later became publicity director of the NAACP. They seemed to be having a good time among the hospitable Russians who went out of their way to show them courtesy.

After a stay of several months and a number of attempts to get started, the movie was called off. The reason, according to *Mezhrabpom* officials, was the inadequacy of the scenario. It was not worthy of the kind of picture they had hoped to make, nor were the actors quite what they expected.

They were a group of intellectuals, not a genuine worker among them and only one professional actor. Most were from the north and knew little or nothing about the South. Some members of the group, however, contended that the reasons for canceling the project were political—that the Soviets were backing away from the project in order to curry favor with the U.S. government. They claimed that equal rights were being sacrificed and the Soviets were betraying Blacks in exchange for diplomatic relations with the United States. At the time, the two countries were about to establish diplomatic relations, and a film depicting racial relations in the U.S. might be considered a violation of the proposed treaty of recognition which enjoined both parties to refrain from hostile propaganda against the other.

This charge was picked up, embellished and hurled throughout the world by the capitalist press. Added to it were accounts of "poor Blacks stranded in Moscow." The *New York Tribune* headlined a story "Negroes Adrift in 'Uncle Tom's' Russian Cabin—Harlem Expeditionary Unit is Stranded in Moscow."[7]

A couple of years later when George Padmore left his post as editor of the *Negro Worker* (organ of the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers in Hamburg), he made use of this incident to try to bolster his flimsy charge that the Communist International had deserted the African liberation struggles.

These charges were false. According to Langston Hughes, the group was on contract and continued to receive their salaries—higher than any of them had ever earned before. They were staying in a luxurious hotel, were wined and dined by the Russians, and were also invited by the theatrical union on a pleasure trip to the Black Sea to visit the resorts of the Crimea and the Caucasus.

Langston Hughes also supported the Russians with respect to the inadequacy of the script. In fact, it was he who called their attention to it. He had read the script, written by a well-known Soviet scenarist whose knowledge of contemporary Black life was limited to the very few books on the subject which had been translated into Russian. He had evidently studied these and put together what he thought was a highly dramatic story of race relations in the United States.

The result, said Hughes, “was a script improbable to the point of ludicrousness. It was so interwoven with major and minor impossibilities and improbabilities that it would have seemed like a burlesque on the screen.” He told studio officials that in his opinion, “no plausible film could possibly be made from it since, in general, the script was so mistakenly conceived that it was beyond revision.”[8]

Mezhrabpom informed the group that they would be paid in full for the duration of their contracts and that transportation via London, Paris or Berlin back to the U.S. would be available whenever they wished to depart. With regard to the future, three choices were offered: exit visas at any time, an extended tour of the Soviet Union before leaving, or permanent residence and jobs for any who desired to remain. All were invited to stay in the USSR as long as they wished.

Langston remained a year, visiting republics in central Asia and traveling in various parts of the Soviet Union. Two members of the group stayed permanently. Wayland Rudd, the actor, appeared in Moscow theaters and performed for the troops at the front during World War II. Lloyd Patterson, a scene designer who was a graduate of Hampton Institute in Virginia, married a Russian woman and stayed in the Soviet Union where he died during the Nazi invasion of Moscow. His wife, Vera, also a scene designer, was a friend of Ina’s.

Homer Smith, a former postal employee from Minneapolis, stayed in the Soviet Union until the beginning of World War II. He got a contract with the Russian postal service and introduced the first special delivery to Moscow.

While I was there, Mother Wright (mother of one of the Scottsboro Boys) was on a tour of Russia and spoke to a whole series of mass rallies, culminating in a huge demonstration and parade of tens of thousands of Soviet workers in Moscow. They went through the main streets of Moscow with placards and banners: “Free the Scottsboro Boys!” “Down with U.S. Imperialism!” and “The Soviet Union—Friend of the Oppressed Blacks.” This enthusiastic support of the Russians for the Scottsboro Boys further belied these slanders.

One day I dropped in at the Bolshoi Moscow Hotel to visit some members of the film group. Entering the lobby I saw my old KUTVA schoolmate Golden and we ran into a Russian embrace. He had gone back to the States in 1928 and had now returned to the Soviet Union with a new wife, a Polish-American woman. They had settled in Tashkent in central Asia, where he was professor of English literature at the university. His wife also taught there and they had a baby daughter.

Golden told me what had happened to him in the past years. Back in the U.S., he had found it difficult to fit into Party work. "I was neither an organizer nor an agitator and I felt I was too old to acquire these qualities," he said. (He was then about forty) "As you know, I never had any Party experience before coming to Russia."

He felt that he could, perhaps, eventually become a teacher of Marxian political economy. "You know I was good at that," he said. He was in fact, an extremely modest and retiring fellow, not one to blow his own horn. I would say the comrades in the States did not know of his qualifications in this respect. He had worked awhile as the manager of the Party restaurant in New York. Then he was sent as organizer to Pittsburgh, but, as he himself admitted, did a poor job there.

He was a loyal communist, however, and it occurred to him that there was one thing he could do for the Soviet Union and that was to organize a group of Black technicians to go there to work. Approaching his old teacher at Tuskegee, the famed Dr. George Washington Carver, he solicited his aid in getting together a group of agricultural specialists to go to the Soviet Union. Dr. Carver seemed enthusiastic about the project and immediately sought volunteers from among his former students.

They eventually got together a group of nine agricultural specialists, agronomists and agricultural chemists. There was also one young civil engineer, Charles Young, the son of Colonel Young—West Point graduate and highest ranking Black officer in the U.S. Army at the beginning of World War I.

The whole group signed contracts through the *Amtorg* (Soviet trading organization in the U.S.). Led by Golden, they left for the

USSR. Otto told me he saw them off when they sailed from New York. He asked Golden when he was coming back. Repeating a verse of the once-popular song, Golden replied, "I'll be back when the elephants roost in the trees."

Golden died in Tashkent just before World War II. In addition to his work as a professor, he was at that time a member of the city Soviet. He must have been a very popular man because we heard that the whole town turned out for his funeral.

Most of the young Black technicians remained permanently, married and had families in the Soviet Union. One became head of the largest state poultry farm in the Soviet Union and another, Sutton, an agricultural chemist from San Antonio, Texas, invented a process for producing rope from rice straw.

My desire to bring Ina back to the States was made known to the appropriate authorities. We had no trouble at all. She was immediately given an exit visa. Naturally, her mother was sorry to be separated from her only child, but she approved of Ina's leaving—saying she wanted her daughter to be happy.

We left Moscow for Riga, site of the nearest American embassy (the Soviet Union was not recognized by the U.S. at this time). Arriving in Riga we proceeded at once to the American embassy to get the necessary papers which would allow Ina to enter the United States as my wife and become a permanent resident. At the time, I thought there was a possibility of getting immediate approval so she could come through with me. I knew that this had happened in some cases, but I was quickly disabused of this naive hope.

At the embassy I was subjected to a quiz; the ambassador himself took part in the questioning. I could tell by his accent that he was a polite Southern gentleman. Behind the mask, I could sense the hostility towards me. I told them I was a writer and had spent time in the Soviet Union a couple of years before. There I had met Ina, and we had gotten married. Now I had returned to bring her back with me. They asked me all sorts of questions about the Soviet Union—how I liked it, what it was like. I gave general answers. It was clear they knew all along who I was.

Finally I was told that they didn't handle visas from that office in this connection. I would have to go back to the United States and apply through the Immigration Department to bring Ina in. They assured me I would have no problem. I should leave Ina in Riga. This, they said, was the normal procedure. The ambassador, keeping up the friendly facade, bade me goodbye in a polite way and wished me luck.

Fortunately, we had friends in Riga. The Armenian Vartanyan, a member of the YCI, had given us the name of his uncle, a wealthy doctor in the city, who had his own health sanitarium. Ina could stay there as a guest as long as she wanted.

The city of Riga was a notorious spy center. A listening post for the U.S., it was the nearest place to gather information on the Soviet Union for U.S. intelligence. Many of the anti-Soviet "experts" were centered there, and the city served as a lie factory. For example, they reported twenty million people had starved to death in famines in 1932. I was there that year, and while I saw some tightening of the belt as a result of the bad harvest, there was no starvation. Then there was even cruder stuff about the "nationalization of women"—all invented by newspapermen in the bars in Riga.[9]

I was in Riga just three or four days and regretfully left Ina with the doctor and his family. He assured me everything would be all right. We went to the station where I caught the train for Berlin; Ina and I embraced, and she watched as the train pulled out. I never saw her again.

From Berlin I went to Bremerhaven and got passage home on the liner *Bremen*. Immediately on arrival in the States I went to the Immigration office on Ellis Island to apply for a visa for Ina. Here they were quite rude. One guy asked me, "Who is she—a communist? We're not letting any communists in, you know."

I said, "No. She's just a Soviet citizen." They gave me an application to fill out.

I then asked when I could hear from them and they told me it would be a month or so. "Why does it take so long?" I asked.

They said they had to investigate.

I kept in close touch with Ina assuring her that things would turn out all right. I also called the Immigration Department, constantly inquiring about the application.

After several months, I became convinced my application for Ina's visa was being deliberately obstructed by the Immigration Department itself. So I started my own campaign, assisted by my friend William Patterson, then national secretary of the International Labor Defense. We felt the best way to get results was to threaten the immigration authorities with public exposure—it was a clear case of discrimination against a Black man!

We enlisted the support of several liberals, including the Committee for the Defense of Political Prisoners headed by Rabbi Benjamin Goldstein and Malcolm Cowley of the American Civil Liberties Union. They addressed a telegram to the commissioner of immigration in Washington, demanding to know the reasons for the delay and denouncing this inhuman treatment. "Is it because she is white and Mr. Hall is Negro?" they asked.

We got an immediate reply from the commissioner himself. He denied the delay had anything to do with racial discrimination and said he would like to see Mr. Hall down in Washington so we could talk the matter over.

Pat and I went down to the office of the commissioner in Washington. Patterson, as my attorney, was on the offensive and launched right in. But the commissioner told him to hold back. There's no discrimination here, he told us, but of course, we're not going to let any communists in. We objected, saying she was not a communist, just a citizen of the Soviet Union.

Then the commissioner raised the question of my previous marriage. They as yet had no proof of the termination of that marriage. I replied that that was no problem; I would get the proof for them.

Shortly after I had arrived in Moscow in 1926, I had gotten a letter from my sister Eppa. She told me she had run into Hazel, my former wife. Hazel had told her she had divorced me, was remarried and had some children. So I assumed there would be no trouble getting confirmation of the divorce.

I immediately went to Chicago and saw my sister. She repeated what she had written to me, told me where Hazel was living and then took me there to see her. I explained to Hazel that I needed to get confirmation of our divorce. But she said she hadn't divorced me.

"What do you mean?" I asked, amazed.

"You know, it's against my religion. My church doesn't approve of divorces," she said.

I was astounded. Here she was living with someone else and with children, but she couldn't approve of divorce!

I wrote Ina, telling her what had transpired and told her I thought the best thing to do was for her to go back to Moscow. I would get a divorce as quickly as I could and then go back.

But I got bogged down in work. There was no money for a divorce, and no guarantee that even with the divorce, I would be able to get Ina into the country. I felt very sad about this and we did exchange letters for a time, but I was unable to get back to the Soviet Union in the thirties and we eventually lost contact. I later heard from friends who had visited Moscow that she had remarried.

Chapter 15

Sharecroppers with Guns: Organizing the Black Belt

In the spring of 1933, Haywood Patterson of the Scottsboro Boys was declared guilty by a court in Decatur, Alabama. Following his conviction, a wave of indignation swept Black communities across the country. Mass protest rallies, demonstrations of all sorts and parades culminated in the Free the Scottsboro Boys March on Washington on May 7-9, 1933.

The right danger took concrete form when the ILD leadership allowed themselves to be suckered into an agreement with the NAACP leadership. These leaders made overtures to the ILD, offering to help raise funds for the mounting legal defense expenses and particularly for those of the Patterson appeal.

This offer, however, was made with conditions which amounted to giving the NAACP veto power over all expenditures of defense funds, and thus over defense activities. It was a ploy which would allow NAACP leaders such as Joel Spingarn and Walter White to regain their position in the defense campaign and appear before the masses as leaders in this campaign.

Since the beginning of the campaign two years before, the Spingarn-White crowd had used every possible means to wrest the defense from the ILD. Their efforts were in vain, but they continued to attack—not the lynchers—but the defense. For example, shortly after the Patterson verdict, the NAACP board of directors stated that the only hope for the boys was to "remove ...the additional burden of communism."[1]

Now these leaders, largely discredited and isolated, attempted to get back into the defense. The sharp rise in the movement under the leadership of the ILD, which followed the Patterson verdict, forced them to make a tactical retreat. Realizing they had misjudged the temper of the masses they now attempted to regain a place within the defense in order to more effectively sabotage it. To this end they made overtures to the ILD, offering to help raise funds.

In an ILD staff meeting which I attended as head of the Party's Negro Department, the NAACP offer was discussed favorably by most of the staff. George Maurer, who played a leading role in organizing the Scottsboro defense, and myself were the only ones to object. William Patterson, national secretary, argued that there was no alternative if the organization were to gain the financial support we needed for the Haywood Patterson appeal and the future trials of the other boys.[2] As I recall, our objections were to no avail and the agreement was carried through.[3]

The deal was obviously set up by Samuel Leibowitz, one of America's leading criminal lawyers, who had become quite well known for his defense of certain gangster types. He had volunteered his services free of charge to the ILD and was accepted as the chief defense lawyer in the trial of Haywood Patterson. He won national acclaim by his brilliant conduct of the defense and emerged as a hero of that trial. On his return to New York from Decatur, Alabama, more than 3,000 people poured out of Harlem to greet him at Pennsylvania Station.

Leibowitz was a man of great personal ambition. (He later became a justice of the New York Supreme Court.) He was clearly uncomfortable in the company of revolutionaries and sought to avoid too close identification with the ILD. He brought the ILD and the NAACP together, ostensibly to achieve unity, but in reality to weaken the hold of the ILD on the defense and pave the way for an eventual takeover by the NAACP leadership.

The ILD went on to compound this original mistake. They not only accepted the deal but hailed the NAACP leaders for their "changed attitude." In fact, the agreement reflected no change of heart by NAACP leaders. They continued to draw a line between defense in the courts and the mass movement. They tried to confine their support to the courts and moved to sabotage the mass defense movement, both from within and from without. They refused to support the Free the Scottsboro Boys March on Washington, but this proved to be a serious blunder for the already crisis-ridden and isolated NAACP.

Shortly before the march on Washington, our right opportunist mistakes were continued in the Scottsboro Action Committee, a broad united front which was under the leadership of the ILD. The NAACP had become largely discredited and "left" reformists like William H. (Kid) Davis, publisher of the *Amsterdam News,* tried to step into the vacuum. Davis, along with Black politicians who served as fronts for New York's Tammany Hall, attempted to set up a new so-called non-partisan defense committee for the purpose of the march. This was part of their effort to seize the leadership of the growing mass movement that was calling for a march on Washington. Davis attempted to divert it from a mass march into a committee of representative citizens who would present a petition to the president.

At the beginning of this move, the Scottsboro Action Committee tailed after the reformists. They failed at first to see through the left rhetoric of the group's criticisms of the NAACP. But within a short time, we corrected this mistake and regained leadership of the movement. We did the actual organization and formulation of the proposals for the march, which went over successfully.

I participated in the organization of the march on Washington along with Patterson, Ford and others—helping to prepare the program and working out technical details. The march involved people mainly from the cities of the eastern seabord; there hadn't been time to organize a truly national demonstration. The demand of the march was "Freedom for the Scottsboro Boys," which was tied in with demands in the area of civil rights: an end to discrimination in voting, jury service, schools, housing, public accommodations, trade unions and the death penalty for lynching.[4]

These demands were summed up in the Bill of Rights put forward by the LSNR. The 3,000 marchers, led by Ruby Bates, Mrs. Jane Patterson (mother of Haywood Patterson) and William Patterson of the ILD, demanded to meet with President Roosevelt.[5] Roosevelt was in conference with Dr. Hajalmar Schacht, the special German envoy, and refused to meet the marchers.

We did visit various congressmen who all said it was a matter for the courts, they could do nothing. Oscar DePriest, a Black congressman from the Thompson machine in Chicago, showed his true colors—declaring that we weren't going to get him into this mess! We left the petitions with Louis Howe, the president's secretary; saw Vice-President Garner and the Speaker of the House. We then paraded through the streets of Washington and headed home.

After the march, the Politburo of the Party reviewed the Scottsboro campaign since the Patterson verdict. The right mistakes before the march arose from a basic misconception of the united front. Behind this was the idea that a united front meant unity with everybody, under any conditions. Involved here was a definite underestimation of the class role of the Black reformist leaders as agents of the ruling class in the ranks of the Afro-American people. Their influence could only be destroyed in the course of building a united front with the masses from below. It was the same as the situation in the labor movement with regard to the labor bureaucracy.

We decided that a resolution should be developed in the light of our discussions; the Negro Department was given the task of drafting such a resolution. We summed up these mistakes in a resolution which was adopted by the Politburo. In its criticism of the ILD's deal with the NAACP, the resolution stated that the ILD should have offered the NAACP a "straight forward and clear proposal of mass struggle and mobilization of the masses against the capitalist frame-up courts and Jim-Crow legal system."

If the NAACP had accepted this program, it would have clearly discredited their past policy of relying on the courts. "If they had refused such an offer, this also would have cleared the issues before the eyes of the masses."

The resolution went on further to state:

> In such a broad mass struggle as that of the Scottsboro conscious agents of the ruling bourgeoisie endeavor to come into the united front for the purpose of smashing the mass movement and thus serving the bourgeoisie....It is necessary... to warn the masses constantly of the class role of these elements....Under all conditions it is necessary to maintain the independent role of the Party and of the revolutionary forces in such a united front both in regard to our agitation and our actions.[6]

SOUTHERN TOUR

Our line, projecting the question of U.S. Blacks as essentially that of an oppressed nation, called for making the South the "center of gravity" for work among them. Though I had spent a brief period in North Carolina, it was not the deep Black Belt South, the focus of the Party's concentration. I was eager to visit the area, to see how our theory regarding the national question and the role of the "Black peasantry" were being worked out in practice.

The opportunity came in the early part of 1933. In consultation with the Alabama district organizer, Nat Ross; Elizabeth Lawson, acting editor of the *Southern Worker* (the Party's Southern newspaper); and Al Murphy, secretary of the Sharecroppers Union (all of whom were in New York at the time), it was decided that I should spend several weeks in the Alabama district.

Arriving in Birmingham, I had no difficulty in finding the hotel where the comrades had arranged for me to stop. It was on Fourth Avenue, downtown in a small Black business area, near the *Birmingham World*, the city's Black weekly.

When I registered, the owner and desk clerk said, "Oh, yes, Mr. Haywood. We've been expecting you. Your friends will be here shortly."

I was shown to my room and a few minutes later two young Black comrades, Hosea Hudson and Joe Howard, came to my room. Both were unemployed steel workers. They had been assigned as my liaisons to the local Party organization.

In Birmingham, the South's greatest industrial center, the ruling white supremacist oligarchy expressed the interest of local capitalist Black Belt planters of the adjacent counties, local representatives of northern based industrial and financial corporations. Most of these latter merged socially with their Southern counterparts. At the top of the corporate list was the gigantic United States Steel Corporation, sprawling over a section of the town itself. The Gentlemen's Agreement of 1877 remained in full force.

The principle enunciated by Judge Taney in the Dred Scott decision that the Black has no rights that the white man is bound to respect was still fully operative. Jim Crow laws in public places were strictly enforced. The purpose of it all was to preserve a cheap, subservient, divided and unorganized labor force of degraded, disenfranchised Blacks and poverty-ridden whites. The latter were psychologically compensated by being accepted as members of a superior race.

In Birmingham, racism was all-pervasive and blatant. One could feel it in the atmosphere. Birmingham was a mean town, a place where the police periodically shot down Black people to "keep them in line," the latter being mostly young and unemployed.

When we walked down the street, Hosea and Joe told me, "If you expect to work down here, you gotta look like the rest of us. You gotta cut out that fast walking with your head up in the air—or these crackers'll spot you. Get that slouch in your walk. Look scared, as if you are about to run," he joked. These were big tough men talking now. Of course they were kidding—still, there was a grain of truth in these remarks.

Now a new element had entered the picture—the Communist Party. Formed in 1930 by organizers from the north, the Party in Birmingham took the first steps towards building a union of steel workers, laying the groundwork for building the CIO Steel Workers Union in 1935. It had initiated a movement of unemployed which organized a demonstration of 7,000 people on the steps of the Jefferson County Courthouse in November 1932.[7]

Though the numbers were not large, the Party grew rapidly during the 1932 election campaign. Three hundred Blacks and fifty whites gathered to greet William Z. Foster at an election rally. Foster, however, failed to appear because of illness. The following week, 400 Blacks and 300 whites attended a meeting to hear Hathaway; this meeting was broken up by vigilantes throwing stink bombs from galleries. There were also a number of mass meetings called on the Scottsboro issue, including one of 3,000 people at the Black Masonic Temple.

The Party had chosen Birmingham as the center for its drive into the deep South and as the logical jump-off place for the development of a movement among the small Black farm operators.

The most dramatic struggle was the movement of tenants, sharecroppers and farm laborers centered in Tallapoosa County, southeast of Birmingham. The area bordered on the Black Belt plantation region and resembled the latter in respect to farm values, types of tenancy and racial composition. The first local of the Sharecroppers Union was organized there in 1931. That was before the Federal Relief Crop Reduction Program had been instituted. The small owners, tenants, croppers and farm laborers were hit the hardest by the crisis. Merchants and bankers had refused to "furnish" or provide them credit. Mortgages left them at the mercy of their creditors. Small operators lived under constant threat of foreclosure and eviction. The wages for farm laborers ran as low as fifty cents a day for men and twenty-five cents for women.[8]

The close proximity to the Party organization in Birmingham facilitated the organization of these poor farmers in the area. A number of them had worked in mines north of Birmingham and in steel plants and factories in the city itself, returning to the land to eke out a living during the Depression. There was a continuous movement to and from the city, and those who didn't make the move themselves had close relatives who did so. Thus the development of the sharecroppers' struggle in Alabama, in contrast to other regions of the Black Belt where oppression was equally intense (for example, South Carolina or Mississippi), took a more organized and consciously revolutionary form. This accounts for what struck me as the relatively high political development of union members.

Local farmers sent a letter to the *Southern Worker* in Chattanooga, asking that organizers be sent to help them build a union. The Party responded and sent several people, among them Mack Coad, a Black steelworker. Coad, arriving at the scene, met with the Gray brothers—Ralph and Tom—and other local leaders. It was decided that a meeting should be called for July 16, at Mary's Church near Camp Hill, to protest the Scottsboro convictions. Included in the agenda of the meeting would be plans for organizing a union around the minimum demands of the tenants. The most immediate aim was to force the landlords to increase the quantity of "furnishings" through the winter, and double the wages of the plantation laborers. A last minute arrangement committee of the leaders met the night before, on July 15.

The county sheriff and local gentry were aware of the defiant moods among the sharecroppers. The sheriff had been tipped off by a local stoolpigeon that an outside agitator was in the area and that radical meetings were being held. The same stoolpigeon informed them about the meeting of leaders on July 15. He and his deputies, seeking the "outsider," raided the meeting. They found that they were all from Tallapoosa County, and they convinced the sheriff that the meeting was just a harmless get-together and that they knew nothing about an outside organizer.

The next night, July 16, the sheriff and his deputies approached the meeting, where they were confronted by Ralph Gray, who had been posted as a picket. Shots were exchanged in which both Gray and the sheriff were wounded. The sheriff and his deputies fled back to town, where a posse was formed amidst cries of "communist-instigated Negro rebellion," and a manhunt began.

In the ensuing battle, five Blacks were wounded in addition to Ralph Gray. A Black cropper helped carry him to his home, where Coad and several other armed Blacks had gathered. The posse approached Gray's home and a battle ensued. The croppers, faced with overwhelming odds, decided to disperse. Gray, however, refused to be removed to safety and insisted upon "dying in his own home." The croppers insisted that Coad must flee and helped him to escape to Atlanta. Gray's home was riddled with bullets by the posse and when they broke in, he was found dead.

In addition to the wounded, thirty more Blacks were finally rounded up and arrested in the manhunt that followed.

The brutal repression following Camp Hill did not crush the movement; the union regrouped underground and continued to grow. By spring 1932, the union claimed 500 members, mainly in Tallapoosa and Chambers Counties.

In December 1932, there were shoot-outs in Reeltown in Tallapoosa County involving Cliff James, a union leader in the area. The sheriff had tried to serve a writ of attachment on James's livestock as a result of his landlord's refusing him an extension on a year's rent.

The sharecroppers elected a committee to meet the sheriff and when the latter arrived to seize the property, he found union members armed and barricaded in the house. In the ensuing battles, the sheriff and two deputies were wounded, one sharecropper killed and several wounded, including James and Milo Bentley. The sharecroppers scattered through the woods. James and Bentley made it to Tuskegee Institute, where according to several accounts, a Black doctor turned them over to the sheriff. They were then taken to Kilby Prison where both men with their wounds untreated were forced to sleep on the cold floor; both subsequently died from exposure.[9]

This shoot-out was followed by mob action and violence exceeding that of the previous year after the Camp Hill affair. A posse of more than 500 men went on a manhunt for Black farm operators and "communist agitators." Mobs raided homes of union members; several were reported to have been killed or beaten. Many union members fled to the woods for safety and the number of Blacks killed in the four-day rioting was not known.

I was told that some white farmers had hidden Blacks in their homes during the rampages of the sheriff's mobs. At the time, I was told by someone that the racists had trouble getting enough men for their posses from Tallapoosa County and had to go outside the county to recruit vigilantes.[10]

The bodies of the two men were laid out in Birmingham, draped in broad red ribbons decorated by the hammer and sickle. The *Daily Worker* reported:

> Day and night, a guard of honor, composed of Negro and white workers, stood at attention by the coffins. The funeral home was filled with flowers and wreaths....Thousands of workers filed past the coffins to pay tribute to the martyred leaders of the sharecroppers.[11]

Some 3,000 people attended the funeral, 150 of whom were whites.

Again terror failed to suppress the union. Despite the arrest of some of its most active members, union members and sympathizers poured into Dadeville (the county seat) before dawn on the day of the trial of those arrested. The courtroom was filled and the crowd overflowed into the square. On the second day of the trial, roadblocks were put up and whites filled the courthouse to prevent Blacks from attending. Nevertheless, Blacks came along the by-passes and across streams, demanding to be seated. The judge was put on the spot and requested the whites to clear half the courtroom. The trial resulted in the sentencing and conviction of those accused.[12]

The union nevertheless continued to grow and by 1933 had 3,000 members, including a few whites. Its membership and influence was extending to neighboring counties. The shoot-outs at Camp Hill and Reeltown brought into focus the explosive character of the struggle of the region's Black soil tillers. It revealed that the fight for even the smallest demands by the sharecroppers and tenants could lead to armed conflict. In fact, any demand that would give Blacks a voice in renting and determining wages was regarded as insurrectionary by the local gentry.

It was this explosive feature which distinguished the movement of Black soil tillers from that of the white farmers in the rest of the country or even the South itself. The demands of the Blacks were more revolutionary than those of the whites for they represented the demands of the agrarian and democratic revolutions, left unfinished by the betrayal of Reconstruction.

Following all this in New York, I was eager to visit Alabama and the sharecroppers. I was curious to know how the union had grown in the face of all that terror. What were the methods of organization they used? Al Murphy told me to go down to the area itself.

Murphy was a tall, jet-hued Black, an ex-steelworker and the most important organizer of the sharecroppers. Soft-spoken and modest to the point of self-effacement, he had given me a rundown on the Sharecroppers Union, playing down his own role and disclaiming credit for its achievements. Murphy was a self-educated Marxist, a genuine worker-intellectual.

He praised the local leaders and their high level of political development. He said the people built the organization from their own experience and that the croppers had a tradition of underground organization. Any people who had experienced that kind of oppression, he said, would have done the same thing.

Discussing the matter with local comrades in Birmingham, it was agreed that I should go to Tallapoosa County, but I had to wait for them to arrange security. The opportunity came when Lem Harris and Hal Ware, leaders of the Party's national farm work, passed through Birmingham on their way to an executive board meeting of the Sharecroppers Union. They were heading for Dadeville.

We left Birmingham at dusk, driving at night so as not to attract attention. The car was a Chevrolet coupe—the two-door model with a fold-down rumble seat in the back. I sat in the rumble seat. When we got to Dadeville it was dark. Hal turned to me saying, "You'd better pull down the top of the rumble seat over you." I hastily complied as we were in enemy territory and didn't want to attract attention.

We soon passed the lights of Dadeville. A short distance out, we came to a farmhouse and stopped. This was Tommy Gray's place. He was a small independent farm operator and like most of his fellow operators in the area, he was deeply in debt. Greeted by Gray who had expected us, we went into the house. He had met Hal and Lem at the Farmers' National Relief Conference the year before. He took our coats and put them in the bedroom which looked like a small arsenal.

There were guns of all kinds—shotguns, rifles and pistols. Sharecroppers were coming to the meeting armed and left their guns with their coats when they came in. Everyone came and left at night; the meeting lasted, as I remember, two days. There were fifteen or twenty people there, members of the executive board. I was impressed by the efficient manner in which Gray conducted the meeting; they were an impressive group overall.

I was introduced as a member of the Party's Central Committee. As I recall, I spoke about the international situation and the Scottsboro and Herndon cases. Hal and Lem said a few words about the farmers' movement in other parts of the country and the follow up of the National Farmers Conference.

I was most impressed by the reports of the leaders of locals about their areas. They described conditions, how they were preparing for a strike, and gave reports on different landlords. I was also impressed that they could spread a leaflet over four counties inside of fifteen minutes. They had a tight underground organization.

I learned there of an attempt to assassinate Tommy Gray. It seemed that Tommy was fishing at the creek, when he heard a shot and a bullet whizzed past his ear. He turned quickly and saw a man running whom he recognized as Charles Harris, a cropper and union member. The union had set up a committee to investigate the incident and they brought a report back at the meeting I attended. One of the reporters told the group that they had visited the accused man and uncovered other information. He had evidently been hired by somebody from the town, a sheriff or landlord, to kill Tommy Gray. They had bribed the man with a promise not to call his loan in if he would do their work.

A discussion followed the report, as people wondered what to do with the turncoat. Some argued he should be permanently got rid of. But other, cooler heads, argued that this would only play right into the hands of the sheriff. He would use it as an excuse to come down on the whole group. The sober point of view prevailed. It was decided a committee would visit the man and tell him to get out of the area; if he didn't, then they would deal with him. I heard later that this tactic was successful, and the man and his family left after the delegation's visit.

I left Dadeville in high spirits, more than ever convinced of the correctness of our line; that the Black Belt peasantry under the leadership of the working class and the Communist Party was the motor of Black rebellion in the deep South. I felt that the Sharecroppers Union was definitely a prototype for the future organization of the Black, landless, debt-ridden and racially persecuted farmers of the area.

The union continued to grow after I left. By the fall of 1935, it claimed 12,000 members, including some poor whites; 2,500 of these were scattered in Louisiana, Mississippi, Georgia and North Carolina. In 1936 it was liquidated—a victim of Browderism.

On my return trip to the national office in New York from Birmingham, I decided to stop over in Atlanta for a few days. This would be a chance for me to check on the Party's activities in this important city and to see Ben Davis, Jr. Ben was the young Black attorney who had courageously and dramatically defended Angelo Herndon in the famous "insurrection" case. It was this case which brought young Davis national attention. Along with Scottsboro, it had become a symbol of the fight for Black rights.

As I neared Atlanta, I tried to recall what I knew of Ben. Although we had never met, I had learned about his background from friends who were active with him in the Herndon defense. Ben's father was a self-made man from a poor Georgia family. He had worked his way into prominence and some wealth in Atlanta, and was high in the councils of the Republican Party, once having served as a national committeeman. An old-style Republican in the tradition of Frederick Douglass, he was a determined fighter for civil rights, voting, education and opportunity for Black business.

He had become owner and publisher of the *Atlanta Independent,* an influential Black newspaper. He was also the district grand secretary of the Negro Odd Fellows, the largest fraternal order in the state. From this position, he was able to build the imposing Odd Fellows business block on Auburn Avenue. Ben Senior had had ambitious plans for his only son. He had sent him to exclusive New England schools—Amherst and Harvard Law School. But the Depression had interrupted these plans.

The Depression had an especially devastating effect on the Black community. Not only were poor and working class Blacks driven into deeper poverty, but the small and growing Black middle class, which was already on marginal foundations, was almost completely wiped out. Ben Davis, Sr., became a victim of the Depression. He lost the newspaper and the business block passed into the hands of an insurance company.

Coupled with economic decline was the inauguration of Hoover's "Southern Strategy" of replacing Black Republicans with a lily-white faction. Ben Senior was removed from his post as Republican national committeeman, with a corresponding loss of his powers of patronage.

Young Davis returned from his Ivy League education to find this devastated situation. A young Black attorney in the South was forced to work in a very narrow field. It was unheard of for a Black to argue a case against a white attorney. This left Ben Junior with drafting deeds, wills, contracts, divorces and other such matters relating only to Blacks—a severely restricted arena for his Harvard Law School training. Ben hung up his shingle in the old Odd Fellows building, and soon formed a partnership with another Black attorney, John Geer.

He was soon dissatisfied and angry; however, as his frustration grew, he found himself "challenged by the thought of what could be done if one put up a really tough fight for the constitutional rights of Negroes in a Georgia court."[13]

The Herndon case provided Ben with just such an opportunity. Effectively employing a working class policy in the trials, Ben conducted a militant and aggressive defense. He appeared before the court as a tribune for Blacks and poor whites against Georgia's white supremacist oligarchy. The trial had been a high point of class militancy.

Arriving in Atlanta by car on a Sunday morning, I went directly to the Davis home. Ben, his father and sister (his mother had died the year before) lived in a large house on Boulevard off Auburn Avenue in a Black middle class neighborhood. The family's past affluence was evident by the five-car garage in the rear of the house. I was warmly greeted by Ben, who had been expecting me. He was a huge, dark-skinned young man. Six feet two inches tall with the bull shoulders of a football lineman, a position he had played at Amherst.

Ben showed me into their large living room. We had a long talk before his father and sister joined us. He filled me in on what was happening in Atlanta. By this time he had joined the Party and a considerable movement had developed around the Herndon case. An ILD office and organization had been established. The Party was still quite small, though there were a number of white members.

The next day Ben took me down to his office on the fifth floor of the Odd Fellows building. He spoke about the threats against him by the authorities and the Ku Klux Klan, which was virtually an arm of the state. Men took off their police uniforms to put on the robes of the Klan. He talked of the hounding and the threats as a result of his fight in the court.

He showed me a hole in the door between his office and an adjoining room. Just a few weeks after the trial, he was sitting at his desk and noticed a kind of tube sticking out of the hole in the door. Ben went up to examine it and discovered it was the barrel of an empty revolver which was set up against the door. He pulled a paper out of the barrel and read the message: "The Ku Klux Klan rides again. Georgia is no place for bad niggers and red communists. Next time we'll shoot."

He also told me about what had happened downtown, at the ILD office on Peachtree Street. A white comrade, the wife of ILD attorney Irving Schwab, was in charge of the office. Ben came into the office, which was in a white neighborhood downtown, fairly often. Once, as he was coming out of the door, a whole gang was waiting for him. He thought they were from the neighboring offices in the building. He was backed up against the wall, into a corner. No one touched him, but they shouted at him, calling him a nigger son-of-a-bitch, threatening to get him or run him out of town.

With the jailing of Angelo Herndon, the authorities assumed they had disposed of one enemy. They now found themselves faced with another one—Ben Davis. In addition, the Atlanta movement had begun to grow. There were mass meetings around the

Scottsboro and Herndon cases which had drawn many Blacks.

The ILD was militant and growing along with a small but active Communist Party. While I was in Atlanta, I visited a meeting or two of the ILD and the Party. I recall a Party meeting that was held in the home of the Leathers, an old white Southern working class family, long active in radical politics.

There seemed to be about three generations of the Leathers living in that house. This included Nannie Washburn who was then a young mother. Otto had recruited her into the Party and she played a leading role in the Herndon and Scottsboro defense. She was to remain active in the struggle long after the Party's desertion of the South. Jailed in the civil rights and anti-war movements, Mrs. Washburn remains today a staunch fighter in the cause of proletarian revolution.

I was worried about Ben Davis, about his safety. I didn't think the threats were idle—they could be carried out—especially after the trial, when there was a lull in the movement. Worries I had had in New York about the situation in the South were borne out by what I now heard in Atlanta. The more I thought about the matter, the more I felt Ben should be pulled out of there—for a time, anyway.

I had sized him up as an up-and-coming young communist, with great leadership potential. He would be a good addition to our growing body of cadres—we didn't need another martyr, we needed living activists. He was such a dynamic aggressive person; if we got him to the center and national work, he would develop more fully as a communist.

So upon my return to New York, I presented my opinions to the Politburo—we should draw him out of Atlanta. He agreed to come to New York, where he was first made editor of the *Liberator*, relieving Maude White; he later worked on the *Daily Worker*. He became a city councilman in the forties and a member of the Politburo of the Party after Browder's demise.

He grew into an important Party leader with whom I was to have strong political differences in later years.

In March 1934, I was back in Birmingham, Alabama. On my previous visit Nat Ross, the district organizer, had talked about building the revolutionary movement in Memphis, along with New Orleans, the great financial and commercial center of the lower Mississippi Valley. I had agreed on the necessity of such a step.

Memphis, however, would be a hard nut to crack. Twice the Party had tried to build an organization there. Twice our organizers had been run out of the town by the Memphis police. First it was Tom Johnson, then I believe, Mack Coad.

In those days Memphis had the reputation of being the murder capital of the nation. It boasted the country's highest homicide rate and had attained the distinction by police murders of Blacks.[14] In this respect, it was worse than in Birmingham where the growth of the communist movement had resulted in curbing police killings, to some extent.

In Memphis, the police were unrestrained; it was open season on Blacks, especially on weekends. Victims were usually among the lowest strata, unemployed, friendless and homeless migrants from the countryside seeking employment in the city. They fell into the catch-all category of vagrants, persons with no visible means of support.

Clearly a breakthrough in Memphis required careful planning and most of all, capable organizers. Now, according to Nat, these requisites were present. He had received word from members of a Jewish branch of the International Workers Order (IWO) in Memphis that they were willing to subsidize an International Labor Defense organizer. The IWO was a left-wing insurance organization among whose members were a number of communist and Party sympathizers. I knew the organization, but did not know it had a branch in Memphis.

Nat also informed me that there were two young comrades from New York available for the project—Forshay, an ILD organizer, and Boris Israel, a young communist journalist who was writing a series of articles on the South for the *New Masses*. Israel offered to accompany Forshay.

"Now," Nat said, "if we could only find a good Negro comrade."

"When do we leave?" I asked.

He looked at me with feigned surprise and said, "You really think you should go, Harry? And that it would be alright with the Central Committee?"

"Of course," I replied. I was anxious to undertake this assignment, my first organizing job in the South. I could stay there a little while to help get things started and help make contacts with the Black population.

I was then introduced to the young comrades and at midnight we were on our way to Memphis.

My two young friends, who shared the driving, were in the front seat. When I woke up it was dawn with the Mississippi countryside all around.

It was Saturday morning and we passed a number of trucks loaded with Black sharecroppers and their families, apparently on their way to buy "stores" in Oxford. Some of the trucks were driven by white Simon Legree-looking characters, whom I assumed to be plantation riding bosses or planters.

We drew up to the gas station to fill our tank, just outside of Oxford. The attendant, a native cracker type, peered in at me with an expression of curiosity on his face. Then, as if he had figured it all out, he drawled, "What're yo-all doin' with that boy—taking him home?"

"Yeah," said Boris, with a mock Mississippi drawl, "takin' him on home."

Then turning to me the guy said, "Yo glad to be home, boy? "

Falling into my "field-nigger" drawl, I replied "Yahza, cap'n, I shore am."

We pulled away and drove through the town of Oxford, passing the old state capitol and courthouse, dating from ante-bellum times. (Oxford's only claim to fame was that it was the home of William Faulkner and the University of Mississippi, "Ole Miss.")

A short distance out of town, we pulled up at the home of a comrade named Ufe, whose address had been given us by Ross. Ufe's wife and sister-in-law were the owners of a small plantation.

As a young man, he had emigrated from his native Denmark and settled in the South, where he married into a former slaveholding family. By this time, the plantation had been hard hit by the crisis and mortgaged up to the hilt. There were, I believe, five sharecroppers on the place. I was to learn that they considered Ufe a fair-minded man. Their contracts included the right to sell their own crop and the right to plant gardens. The homes were equipped with electricity and running water. Recruited by Ufe himself, they were all members of the Sharecroppers Union.

Despite his wife, Ufe had never imbibed the white supremacist doctrine and he insisted that he was not a planter but a farm manager. A member of the Socialist Party of Denmark, he had begun to read socialist papers in the U.S., then the *Daily Worker,* and was finally recruited into the Party by the Birmingham comrades.

I pondered this unusual story which I had heard from Ross and others as we entered the driveway to his home. It was an old run-down ante-bellum structure with columns and all. Ufe, a small wiry man, had been expecting us, and led us into the big living room where a dozen or so sharecroppers and field hands were sitting before a large open fireplace. It was March cold and a huge log was burning. Ufe introduced us to the sharecroppers.

As we talked, I told them about my visit to Dadeville and other things in the outside world. They all listened attentively. We had supper and stayed overnight. His wife was strangely absent, although I'd seen her puttering around in the kitchen.

We left the next morning for Memphis. Arriving there in the afternoon, we drove directly to the house of a Jewish friend, where the IWO was meeting. Our hostess interrupted the meeting, introduced us, and suggested that the matter concerning our visit be discussed presently, under "good and welfare."

Israel, Forshay and I sat in an adjoining room to wait. I picked up a newspaper lying on the table, I believe it was the *Commercial Appeal,* one of the city's big dailies. A front-page article—no more than three or four paragraphs long—caught my attention. It was a story about a young Black man named Levon Carlock who had been killed by police the night before, after allegedly attempting to rape a white woman.

According to the story he had been shot while attempting to escape the scene of the crime. The article listed prominently the names of the officers involved and also the name and address of the alleged rape victim. The murder of Blacks by the police had apparently become such a routine matter that the latter didn't bother to present even a plausible story.

I passed the paper over to Israel and Forshay, exclaiming, "Here's our issue! Let's get to work."

After reading it, they simultaneously declared, "Jesus Christ! That's made to order."

By this time, the meeting in the adjoining room had come to our point on the agenda. I looked over the group. They were middle class people, storekeepers and the like, several professionals, and, as I later learned, one wealthy jeweler. I was surprised that the majority of the group were young couples, some of them born in the South and speaking with Southern drawls. They were very definitely revolutionary in sentiment.

Some were readers of the *Freiheit* (the Yiddish language communist daily) and the *Daily Worker*. Several of them, I was to learn, had participated in the two previous attempts to form a revolutionary organization in Memphis. They represented the left wing of the Jewish community in Memphis and reflected the hatred of an entire community for Boss Crump's reigning political machine in Memphis. Crump was not only a rabid racist, but a Jew-hater as well.

As regarded our mission, there was nothing much to be said. We had come there at their invitation. So they proceeded to the immediate question of the subsidy for Forshay, as the ILD organizer. They had agreed on a salary of sixteen dollars a week, with room and board. He was to stay with the jeweler, who had a large house.

Boris also was to stay with Forshay at the jeweler's and I with a young couple—storekeepers who lived close to the Black neighborhood. That settled, I informed the group about the news article concerning the alleged rape.

Their response was "this happens every day"—it was a common thing. They described the beating and killing of Blacks in the station house, of young Black boys disappearing after they were taken to the station by police, about Blacks being beaten unconscious right out on the street.

We were anxious to pick up on the issue while it was hot. We sent Boris Israel to check on the story while Forshay and I remained at the house, where we set up temporary headquarters. We were quite fortunate to have on our team a man like Boris, with his experience and training as an investigative reporter.

Several hours later he returned, having uncovered a shocking story of racism, murder and police brutality. He had gone directly to the address of the "rape victim," whom he had found to be a prostitute living in the red light district that adjoined the Black neighborhood. Interviewing her, he had found gaping irregularities in her obviously rehearsed story. At first she had talked openly, unrestrainedly about her "horrendous experience." Then suddenly she clammed up, blurting out, "The police cap'n said I was not to talk to anybody." Then she closed the door on Boris.

Boris then interviewed the widow of the murdered man. She lived in a rooming house not far from the scene. She was just a slip of a girl—sixteen she said—but looked even younger. The incident had left her in a state of shock. She was being consoled by an older woman, who turned out to be a maid who lived in the whorehouse.

She began to tell her story. She and her seventeen-year-old husband, Levon Carlock, were newly married and had just come up from Mississippi, where both their families were ruined sharecroppers. She had gotten a job as a maid in one of the white whorehouses. Levon, who was still unemployed, would come to pick her up every night at about 2:00 A.M. and escort her home.

On the night of the tragedy, he had been waiting out in the street for her as usual, when the police officers shot him down. Overcome by grief, Mrs. Carlock then burst into tears and could no longer continue. At this point, the older woman led Boris into another room and continued the story. She had seen the whole incident from a second-story window above the alley.

She said four policemen had taken Levon around into the alley. She had heard noises and cursing, cries of "you Black son-of-a-bitch." "You're the nigger that raped that white woman." They were beating the poor youth unmercifully with their clubs and fists, she said.

Levon kept protesting that he had come to take his wife home. Then, one of the officers appeared escorting a white woman. She said, "I recognized her as one of the prostitutes that lives across the street."

Then the officers asked the woman if Levon was the one that had tried to rape her, and she said "Yeah, he's the one." Then she went back to her house.

They started beating Levon again, knocking him to the ground and pulling out their revolvers. Levon begged for his life, but it did no good. "They shot him down in cold blood, right there in the alley," she said. As they turned and walked away, one of the cops said, "You know that nigger son-of-a-bitch is still alive?" I guess they heard moaning. They stopped, and one of the officers went over and pointed his pistol at Levon's head and blew his brains out right there in the alley. Then a short time later, a Black undertaker came and took his body. The police must have had him laying in wait.

Mrs. Carlock had heard some of this, but hadn't seen it. She had fainted and after she had come to, was hysterical. We kept her in the house overnight; the landlady gave her some pills. In the morning, I went with her to the undertaker to identify Levon's body. Later we got the maid to put her story in an affidavit.

Well, there it was. A perfect issue!

Hoping through such a mass campaign that we could build a Party organization in Memphis, we immediately began our campaign to stir up Memphis. We knew that the issue would take hold of the Black population and we hoped to take advantage of the anti-Crump sentiment among whites to win some of them to our side.

We set out to build a broad united front, under the auspices of the LSNR, which I represented, and the ILD. Then and there we worked out a leaflet, slogans and plan of action. Our slogans were: "Stop Police Murder of Negroes in Memphis!" "Levon Carlock Must Be the Last!"

We called for immediate expulsion of the officers involved, their arrest and prosecution on charges of first degree murder and indemnity to the widow. Our program of action called for the establishment of block and neighborhood committees and mass protest meetings.

The slogans caught fire. Within two or three weeks we had a considerable movement going. Outside of our Jewish friends, we knew no one in Memphis, but they introduced us to their few acquaintances among Blacks. Our most important contact was the editor of the *Memphis World,* Memphis's Black newspaper, and his staff. They were sympathetic and wanted something to be done about the murders. Then we met with a number of lower echelon leaders—ministers, educators, lodge leaders and a few businessmen. We soon had an ad hoc committee going, while we stayed in the background. A number of meetings were called at which Mrs. Carlock appeared, and some neighborhood or block committees were set up as a result.

At the beginning, we had contacted the national office of the ILD and informed Patterson of our plans. We called for a nationwide support campaign, linked up with the Scottsboro and Herndon campaigns. The national office gave us a green light to go ahead with our plans and get a local (white) lawyer to prosecute our case against the police.

A rain of telegrams from across the country poured into the Memphis mayor's office and the *Memphis World* carried news of the campaign. Our Jewish friends succeeded in getting a local lawyer, a white anti-Crump man. "He didn't care so much about Negroes, but he sure hated Crump!" they said.

The campaign spread. Its effectiveness was confirmed by two incidents. Our friends on the *World* kept us informed about everything going on in the community. They told us that a delegation of Uncle Tom leaders had gone to see the mayor. They were alarmed by the threat our campaign posed to their leadership—they were unable to keep the Blacks in line. They pleaded for at least some token concession on the part of the police. For example, a statement from the mayor to the effect that an investigation would be held. Something they could use to counter the "red invasion" of the Black community.

The mayor not only refused to budge, but told the delegation that the police were doing their duty—and they had better do theirs! The city and police, he asserted, would brook no rebellion from the niggers—and you'd better tell your folk that, too! As regards the "red invasion," the mayor said that he was aware that there were a dozen or so reds in the city and that they would be taken care of when the time came. They were apparently waiting for a lull in the movement to move in.

It was also through the *World* people that we met Robert E. Lee, a lieutenant of Bob Church, the Black Republican National Committeeman from Memphis. Lee himself was a prominent man in the community. He sought us out to inform us (in private) that Bob Church liked what we were doing and wanted us to keep it up. He evidently felt that our campaign strengthened his position vis-a-vis Boss Crump.

Daisy Lampkin, national field secretary of the NAACP, came to Memphis in the midst of our campaign. She came there to help the local branch in its annual membership drive and was unaware of the growing movement initiated by the ILD. The whole thing was quite an unpleasant surprise for the woman. The Party and the ILD had had run-ins with her regarding Scottsboro, and she became frantic when she found out about our work in Memphis. Her campaign was low key; conducted under the abstract slogans of "Equal justice and opportunity," which carefully avoided the burning issue of police murders right under our noses.

The NAACP was in an embarrassing spot. They called a mass meeting in one of the largest churches in connection with their membership drive campaign. We invaded it, with Mrs. Carlock dressed in mourning black, and demanded a place on the platform for her. As I remember, she was given the platform and she spoke of the murder, asking for help from the NAACP to prevent anything of this sort from happening again. She proposed a united front of the NAACP, ILD and LSNR against police brutality. The chairman passed it off by referring it to the local board. But after the meeting, Lee told us later, the proposal failed to pass the board by only one vote—he personally had voted for it.

This was to be the beginning of a downturn in our fortunes. Next was the disappearance of our star witness, the maid who worked at the whorehouse. The local attorney asked us to bring her up to his office, but when we went to get her, she had gone. She didn't work there anymore. We speculated that the police had frightened her into leaving town after we sent the affidavit she had given us to the national office and they had published it—either in the *Daily Worker* or the *Labor Defender*. We had a weak reed in the first place, since she was vulnerable herself to a frame-up.

The legal side of the case was important, but now our attorney was helpless without a witness. Without the legal case, we couldn't keep up with the public campaign and it began to lose momentum.

The situation was becoming threatening. The cops were getting ready to move in. We discussed this with our friends and they said we'd made a hell of a good fight, but it would be better to send someone else in, now that we were known. So the three of us went in to the office of the *Memphis World* and the editor said we were lucky, we had just missed the four cops who were looking for us.

We decided it was time to leave town. We first decided to go by the telegraph station to pick up some money Patterson had wired us. Forshay and Israel went in to get the money. I stood outside waiting for them. Two cops came up and looked at the Alabama license plate on the car.

Then Forshay and Israel came out of the office—Boris took in the scene in a glance. He jumped into the car and shouted at me, "Come on, Sam! Let's get out of heah."

"Yassuh," I drawled, and climbed in the back. We kept driving until we got to Mississippi!

It wasn't a total defeat. Forshay stayed behind and continued to organize for the ILD. Our work put the cops on notice that they couldn't get away with the kind of crap they had been dishing out. The raw stuff had to stop; otherwise they would have trouble. The flood of telegrams had an impact. It also helped lay the base for future activity there.

Chapter 16

Preparing for Battle: 8th Convention of the CPUSA

The Eighth Convention of the CPUSA was held in Cleveland, Ohio, April 2-8, 1934. It convened in a world situation of rising fascism and growing threat of war.

Hitler had come to power in Germany the year before and had embarked on a campaign of imperialist aggression. He had promoted a fascist coup in Austria and had reoccupied the Rhineland. In Asia, his Japanese imperial allies had overrun northeast China as a first step toward establishing their "Asian Co-prosperity Sphere" which envisioned the conquest of Asia and the Pacific. Mussolini was planning the invasion of Ethiopia which took place the following year.

At home, the economic crisis had passed its lowest ebb in 1933 and had now leveled off into a deep-going depression. There was no recovery in sight as a high rate of unemployment persisted. It was becoming clear that Roosevelt's New Deal and the National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA) were attempts to bridge the most difficult period for the monopoly capitalists and begin the restoration of their profits. This was indicated in the enormous bounties being poured out by the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, and the ruinous effects of inflation and price fixing in reducing the workers' real wages.

Workers, however, were fighting back in an unprecedented display of militancy and solidarity involving whites, Blacks, women, youth, skilled and unskilled workers, native and foreign born. A strike wave had engulfed the entire nation with over a million workers on strike in 1934, the biggest mass upheaval of workers in the history of the country.

I arrived in Cleveland several days early and stopped at the Black YMCA on Euclid Avenue. I spent these days putting the finishing touches on my report on the Party's Afro-American work. As head of the CP's Negro Department, it was my responsibility to present such a report to the Eighth Convention.

Before I arrived in Cleveland I had attended the convention of District Sixteen in Birmingham, Alabama. District conventions were held throughout the country in the few weeks before the national gathering. These meetings summed up the pre-convention discussion which had begun six months earlier with the publication of the draft resolution on the work and tasks of the Party. The draft was discussed at all levels; shop and street units and sections. Amendments were formulated and disagreements argued out. Delegates to the Eighth Convention were also elected at the district meetings.

I arrived promptly on Monday morning April 2, at the Prospect Avenue auditorium where the convention was to be held. The auditorium was located in a once proud but now crisis-stricken residential neighborhood. Delegates from all parts of the country were arriving. After registering, I began circulating among them.

The composition of the delegates was impressive. There were a number of older Party veterans whose faces I already knew. But the majority seemed relatively young, rank-and-file leaders fresh from the struggles. They appeared expectant and eager, self-confidently girding for a new push towards the revolutionary goals outlined in the draft resolution. They were gathered in groups, exchanging experiences. Among the 233 regular delegates were a significant percentage of Blacks (thirty-nine altogether).[1] In my position as head of the Negro Department, I had become acquainted with a great number of the Party's Black cadre—or I had at least known of their work. But it was heartening to see so many new faces among them. I was particularly happy to see the delegation of sharecroppers from Tallapoosa County. Their spokesman appeared to be Eula Gray, the niece of Ralph Gray—

the sharecropper who had been killed at the Camp Hill shoot-out. I believe I had met her at the home of Tom Gray the summer before. She was a lively and attractive young woman, with big bright eyes.

Later in the convention, she was to give a rousing report to the delegates on the activities of the Tallapoosa County Young Communist League. Describing the work of the youth cadres, she stated that the youth made up 2,000 of the 6,000 members of the Sharecroppers Union.[2]

As she ended her speech she led the delegates in singing a revolutionary version of the old spiritual "We Shall Not Be Moved":

Lenin is our teacher,
We shall not be moved.
Just like a tree that's standing by the water,
We shall not be moved!

Al Murphy, secretary of the Sharecroppers Union, was also present. As usual, he maintained a low profile, pushing the local leaders to the fore. There were also delegates from the fraternal parties of Cuba, Mexico and Canada, among others. To my surprise and pleasure I saw among them my old Lenin School classmate, the Irishman Sean Murray. He had come to the U.S. to bring greetings from the recently-organized Irish Communist Party, of which he was general secretary, and to tour the country to rally support for a united independent Ireland.

Langston Hughes, an important figure in the Black renaissance of the twenties, had recently returned from a year's stay in the Soviet Union. He composed a poem—"Put One More 'S' in the USA"—especially for the convention.

The convention opened with a gigantic mass rally on the night of April 2. The main hall of the auditorium was packed with delegates and visitors. Among the speakers were Robert Minor, Max Bedacht, James Ford and Clarence Hathaway. Bill Foster, the Party chairman, was unable to attend since he had not fully recovered from a heart attack suffered in the 1932 election campaign. He sent a message which was read and greeted with thunderous applause—as was the draft reply which wished him a speedy recovery and quick return to the front lines of the battle. The meeting adopted a manifesto calling upon "the workers to take the revolutionary way out of the crisis in the fight for bread and work and against war and fascism."[3]

The business sessions opened on the morning of April 3 with the election of a presiding committee. The stage was dominated by the backdrop of a mural showing a mighty worker's arm wielding the axe of the united class struggle bursting the chains of capitalist oppression. Cheers and a standing ovation greeted the nomination of honorary members of the presidium, among whom were included Joseph Stalin, Ernst Thaelmann (German leader imprisoned by the Nazis) and Georgi Dimitrov, the hero of the Reichstag trial. He had exposed the flimsy frame-up of the Nazi criminals and his release had been forced by international protest.

The mood of the delegates was enthusiastic, eager, expectant and determined. We felt then that the country teetered on the edge of a revolutionary upsurge—on the eve of historic, revolutionary struggles. Thus, we prepared for battle.

The main task of the convention was mapping out a strategy to win the masses to the revolutionary way out of the crisis. Browder, the Party's general secretary, stepped forth. How this task was to be accomplished was the central thrust of his five-hour report, frequently interrupted by applause.[4]

In a dramatic analysis of the world and domestic situation, Browder stated: "Our task is to win the majority of the working class to our program. We do not have unlimited time to accomplish this goal. Tempo, speed of development of our work, becomes the decisive factor in determining victory or defeat. For fascism is rearing its ugly head more boldly every day."

Taking the line of the Thirteenth Plenum of the ECCI, he said: "The world stands on the brink of revolution and wars. Even the United States, still the strongest fortress of world capitalism, has been stripped of its last shred of 'exceptionalism,' and stands fully exposed to the fury of the storms of crisis."

He went on to expose the first phase of Roosevelt's New Deal program. "Roosevelt promises to feed the hungry by reducing the production of food. He promises to redistribute wealth by billions in subsidies to the banks and corporations. He gives help to the 'forgotten man' by speeding up the process of monopoly and trustification. He would increase purchasing power of the masses through inflation which gives them a dollar worth only sixty cents...he restores the faith of the masses in democracy by beginning the introduction of fascism."

After recording the Party's substantive gains since the last convention, Browder went on to list its immediate tasks in the current period. He called for an extension of the united front from below, with its only condition being unity in struggle, and a fusion for the fight for immediate, partial demands with the revolutionary fight for the overthrow of capitalism. In line with this task, he urged a sharpened attack against the AFL bureaucracy, the Socialist Party and all reformist and renegade groups.

On the Black struggle, Browder called for strengthening the Party's work among Blacks in basic industry—steel, coal, packing houses and marine. The Black worker should be organized into revolutionary trade unions around issues of job discrimination and democratic trade union rights.

He urged an accelerated fight against lynching and for the freedom of the Scottsboro Boys and Angelo Herndon. In addition, it was the job of the Party to raise the slogan of equal rights and for the right of self-determination in the Black Belt.

But these tasks could only be fulfilled, Browder asserted, with an uncompromising fight against the main danger—white chauvinism. It was also necessary to fight against petty bourgeois nationalist tendencies among Blacks.

At the close of his speech Browder called for a party rooted among the workers and toiling farmers.

Once Browder had outlined the general priorities regarding the Black struggle, it was my job, as reporter for the Central Committee on the question, to elaborate in detail and clear up some of the confusion around Black reformism and petty bourgeois nationalism.[5] This was particularly important because for the first time in the Party's history, we had to fight a significant petty bourgeois nationalist deviation which was surfacing within our own ranks.

The general revolutionary perspective outlined by Browder on the Afro-American question meant a sharpened clash with the forces of Black reformism—in both its assimilationist and nationalist forms. This reformist ideology was the main obstacle in the road to achieving the hegemony of Black workers in the liberation struggle.

It was now a "we" or "they" situation, I maintained. My assessment of this situation came out of the Party's experience in its three-year struggle to free the Scottsboro Boys. Scottsboro represented our first serious challenge to recognized Black reformist leadership. The activities of the reformist leaders had increased in direct proportion to the increase of our revolutionary influence among the masses.

The Party's strategy at the time was to wrest hegemony from the reformists and win the leadership of Black workers in the Black freedom front. The Black proletariat, led by its communist vanguard, was then (and remains today) the *only* class that can unite the broad masses of Black people and give the freedom struggle a consistently anti-imperialist content and character, thus building its alliance with the working class as a whole.

In order to carry out this strategy, it was important for us to understand that the attitude of the Black bourgeoisie toward imperialism is not uniform. On the one hand, there is a capitulatory, compromising and, in this country, assimilationist trend; and on the other, a nationalist, sort of ghetto bourgeois tendency. The main social base of this latter trend is among the ghetto petty bourgeoisie—small businessmen, the intelligentsia, ministers, professionals and the like who are the most outspoken representatives of bourgeois nationalist movements. Both trends are in essence reformist, as they seek a solution to the question within the framework of the existing imperialist-dominated social structure.

Permit me a brief digression to describe the disposition of class forces in the Black community as they existed at the time. I would say here that my analysis benefits somewhat from hindsight.

In 1934, the dominant tendency of Black reformism was bourgeois assimilationism, reflecting the strivings and ambitions of the top layers of what DuBois called the "talented tenth." These elites were wealthy professionals, a sprinkling of successful businessmen, top-echelon leaders, upper-bracket educators, local politicians and the like. Centered in the top leadership of the NAACP, Urban League and associate organizations, their orientation for progress was via acceptance into the white world. They saw the solution through a slow evolutionary process under the benevolent auspices of enlightened imperialism and its liberal detachment. Supporters of this trend tend to be staunchly anti-nationalist and can only see advancement for Blacks through aping the white establishment.

The influence of the top assimilationist group within the Black movement derived not from its economic strength, but from its control of the main media of mass influence in the Black community: the press and administration of educational and cultural insitutions. It had strings extending into the top leadership of the whole complex of Black life on all its levels; ministerial alliances, professional and fraternal organizations, women's clubs and the like. They received heavy support in the columns and editorials of the big capitalist press and were the main dispensers of white ruling class patronage.

In 1940, DuBois criticized the NAACP leadership because it regarded the "organization as a weapon to attack the sort of social discrimination that especially irks them, rather than as an organization to improve the status and power of the whole Negro group."[6]

I pointed out in my report that they believe the "fate of the Negro masses is bound up with the maintenance of capitalism." This view of course "implies the collaboration with the white imperialist rulers, or in the words of the N.A.A.C.P. leaders, 'united front of the best elements of both races.'" This type of front could only be built in opposition to "the rising movement of Negro and white toilers, particularly against its leaders—the communists."

Indeed, it was the white liberal elements within the U.S. bourgeoisie who launched the NAACP in 1911 and thenceforward held veto power over all its decisions. They intervened in the movement when the Booker T. Washington Tuskegee machine was under heavy fire from the Young Turks of the Niagara Movement led by W.E.B. DuBois and Monroe Trotter. Big business, alerted of the danger to "sane" leadership represented by an uncontrolled Black movement, rushed forces to the danger spot.

The young intellectuals of the Niagara Movement were overwhelmed with new imperialist pleaders for its cause. They were subject to sustained wooing by humanitarian millionaires, backed up by hard cash in the form of subsidies to Black education, health and religious projects. Wealthy white liberal philanthropists like Joel Spingarn and Mary White Ovington held decisive positions of leadership in the organization. Its circle of supporters included millionaires like Mrs. Cyrus McCormick and Harvey Firestone.

As Ralph Bunche aptly observed, "The N.A.A.C.P. propelled by dominant white hands embarked upon the civil libertarian course that the Negro-inspired Niagara movement had futilely tried to navigate."[7]

The leadership of the NAACP is a self-perpetuating one with ties directly to Wall Street and social democrats like A. Philip Randolph—as well as in more recent years, to trade union bureaucrats.[8] This assimilationist stratum has not ceased to offer opposition on domestic issues, nor has it surrendered its claims to speak for Blacks. But it is its support for monopoly capitalism and belief in the possibility of peaceful, legal, full integration into the system that determines the boundaries and character of its opposition. "This is the core of Negro bourgeois reformism. From this flows its tactical line of reliance on bourgeois courts, legislative bodies, its treacherous compromises with the white ruling class, its reactionary sabotage of the revolutionary struggles for Negro rights."[9]

The bourgeois nationalist tendency had its economic roots in the objective position of the Black bourgeoisie and its peculiar conditions of a stunted development within the structure of monopoly capitalism.

Confronted by overwhelming competition, Black business was marginal and non-industrial in character, mainly retail and service industries. Even here, it was restricted to the leftovers of the big capitalist chain enterprises and economically sounder white establishments.

As a result of this peculiar position, the Black ghetto bourgeoisie (mainly a petty bourgeoisie) found itself caught in an inescapable bind. On the one hand, it had what has been called a vested interest in segregation, upon which it was economically dependent for its market. At the same time, it found segregation the chief obstacle to its social development. It was torn between its immediate economic interest which dictated maintenance of the ghetto as its main base of operation and its desire for social equality. The result was a split personality created by mutually exclusive desires.

As I wrote in *Negro Liberation* in 1948, "The Negro upper class came late to the scene of American economic development... when the key points of the country's economic life were already dominated by big business."[10]

Its leaders sought to rally the masses through appeals to race solidarity, cooperation and loyalty, for a "buy Black" policy. They attempted thereby to foster a kind of Black exclusivism which would objectively run parallel to the segregationist policy of the white power elite. The less affluent sections of the petty bourgeoisie act as the most aggressive spokesmen of this type of bourgeois nationalism.

The militancy of this stratum is very misleading and in fact posed a real danger to the Party at the time. I felt it most important to point this out to the delegates:

> While apparently voicing opposition to the official bourgeois reformist leadership, these petty bourgeois nationalist leaders objectively represent the interests of the bourgeoisie. Therefore, objectively these movements reflect an attempt on the part of the petty bourgeois leaders to seize the leadership of the rising movement of the Negro masses against oppression in order to throttle it by diverting it into reactionary utopian channels, away from revolutionary struggle and hence back into the fold of the bourgeois reformists.

This self-isolationist tendency has been expressed in a plethora of projects for building a Black economy within the walls of segregation. In times of relative prosperity, this tendency existed side by side with the dominant assimilationist trend as a more or less steady undercurrent.

But in hard times, times of economic depression, this stratum, as a result of its weak and tenuous economic position, is forced to the wall of bankruptcy. As the economic conditions of the ghetto masses (upon which they depend) deteriorate—their strivings are blocked. Sections of them, driven to despair, frequently fall under the influence of utopian and messianic leaders who raise the banner of race solidarity and develop mass movements of a separatist character. Such was the base of the Garvey movement and others which followed World War I.

The growth of Garveyism came as a result of the crisis of Black reformism when organizations like the NAACP found themselves without a program to meet the needs of the masses. The end of the post-war economic crisis was followed by a period of partial capitalist stabilization and relative prosperity in the latter half of the twenties. This witnessed the decline of the Garvey movement and the comeback of the NAACP to the leadership scene.

But its hegemony was only short lived. The crisis of 1929 found the old guard again in crisis. Again there was an upsurge of separatist trends, expressing the desperation of the ghetto nationalists. Again there was a breakaway of the middle strata which comprised its rank and file and lower-echelon leaders. By the mid-thirties, these defections had reached into the top echelons of the organization, resulting in the resignation of Dr. DuBois from the NAACP. Unfortunately, his defection was not to the rising revolutionary forces, but rather toward petty bourgeois nationalism. (By the fifties, however, DuBois had been won to proletarian revolution and was a firm supporter of socialism.)

But this time, a new force had entered the arena of the liberation struggle. Since the Garvey movement, a Black working class had emerged as an independent class force. Its advanced detachment, including many former Garvey militants, was the Communist Party, with a revolutionary program and strategy for Black liberation.

It furnished the leadership for a new, national revolutionary trend. It was primarily because of the rapid growth of this new force that the ghetto nationalist wave which swept the Black communities in the early thirties did not coalesce into a single organization with a unified program and a national center as did the Garvey movement in the post-war decade. This time it was manifested in a series of mainly local-based movements.

The main theme of my report was the call for a stepped up ideological struggle against bourgeois reformism and its reactionary programs and policies in the current crisis.

I called attention to the treacherous activities of the NAACP and Urban League leadership which had greeted the New Deal as virtually another emancipation proclamation. I pointed out that the "clear-cut bourgeois reformist movements such as the NAACP and the National Urban League...with their openly declared policies of collaboration with the white ruling class" were not the main danger. To a large extent, they had already lost the confidence of the masses. Our immediate problem lay in the new neo-Garveyist movements which were spreading like brushfire through the Black communities. These appealed to the nationalist mood among the masses and advocated the wildest reactionary schemes as a way out of the misery and suffering of the ghetto masses.

I briefly analyzed some of these movements against which "we would have to direct our fire in the coming period."

I noted three types of such movements. For example, the Nationalist Movement for the Establishment of a 49th State, headquartered in Chicago. The leaders of this organization held that Black oppression and racism in this country were natural and inevitable. Therefore they proposed that "the Federal government acquire a territory from the existing States (adequate in size and fertile in soil) and dispose of this land its resources to Negroes willing to settle." This defeatist scheme, according to its advocates, would not only solve the problem but, we were informed, "will do much to relieve the economic stress throughout the country due to the vast oversupply of workers who can't find work."[11]

Another movement of this type, also originating in Chicago, was the Peace Movement to Liberia. The leaders of this organization claimed four million members who had signed a petition addressed to the president, asking that the government pay the expense of Blacks' transportation to Liberia or Ethiopia to settle. The signers of the petition, according to the leaders, stated that "they hold themselves in readiness to be eliminated from the impossibly competitive labor market here by transportation in government transports to Africa."[12]

Further, they stated, an exodus of the poorest people would benefit both races, improve labor conditions for those remaining, and promote the long deferred economic recovery. Emphasizing the peaceful, non-revolutionary character of the movement, its utter subservience to imperialism, its advocates asserted that their scheme entailed no complication with foreign imperialist powers and they were not out to set up an independent state but to become "law-abiding" citizens in their newly-adopted countries.

It was clear that these schemes fit precisely into the whole program of the most racist and reactionary elements, such as the infamous Senator Bilbo of Mississippi.

We considered that perhaps the most dangerous of these movements was the so-called Jobs for Negroes movement. It cropped up in many different cities under different names. In Harlem it was called the Sufi movement and was led by the notorious Abdul-Hamid Sufi; in Baltimore it appeared as the Costini Movement; in Washington, D.C., it was the Negro Alliance. The local nationalist leaders (and very often these "leaders" saw the movement as a remunerative hustle) all followed a similar plan.

They focused their struggle for more jobs on the small white-owned businesses and shops which refused to hire Blacks. The policy of a small firm's excluding Blacks from employment while selling products in the ghetto created a great deal of anger and animosity among Blacks. The Jobs for Negroes movement thrived on this justly felt anger. But by directing the struggle exclusively against these small establishments, which had only a small fraction of jobs, the broad struggle of Black unemployed was diverted away from the large corporations which were located mostly outside the ghetto.

These movements tended to quickly become anti-white, seeing the enemy as the white workers who held jobs in the ghetto. Demands such as "All jobs for Blacks in Harlem," were common.

The ruling class was overjoyed with this type of movement. It did not attack the real enemy nor raise demands for jobs, equality and the end to discrimination where the main masses of Blacks worked and where the majority of the jobs were. Instead they sought to divert the struggle for jobs from the real enemy to white workers and aggravated racial divisions precisely at a time when conditions and potential for a united struggle were very great.

Even more sinister was the Pacific Movement for the Eastern World. It had as its main slogan "United Front of Darker Races under the leadership of Japan." The movement developed directly in connection with the threat of war between the U.S. and Japan, and was basically the work of the Japanese imperialist agents who were attempting to divert the growing national liberation movement of Blacks into support for Japanese imperialism.

Its program for race unity, as opposed to working class unity and the unity of all toilers against imperialism, found support among some sections of Black petty bourgeois intellectuals and even some workers. This movement was particularly poisonous because of the racial and chauvinist propaganda, attempting to convince Blacks that Japan was the "champion of the darker races."

In practice this movement ran counter to the real interests of the Black masses and, in many cities, was an obstacle to the organization of struggle for immediate demands. A good example was in St. Louis where leaders of the Pacific Movement were active in attempting to defeat a strike of Black and white nut pickers.

The third tendency was the Liberian-American Plan, which was a clearly bourgeois expression of Pan-Africanism. Under the guise of assistance to Liberia (their slogan was "Freedom for Liberia!"), it was a plan of the aspirant Black bourgeoisie to participate in a comprador role in the colonial exploitation of Liberia. This can be seen in the statements of one of its leaders: "We are beating our hearts and souls trying to break through thick walls of prejudice which bar us from the higher brackets of big industry here in

America, when there is a virgin field which we could develop in Africa."[13] The so-called plan to free Liberia carefully avoided any mention of the role of U.S. imperialism (Firestone owned huge rubber plantations in Liberia) in the exploitation of the Liberian people.

This plan received a large amount of publicity throughout the Black-owned media. Its appeal to the impoverished Black masses was mainly that a "Free Liberia" could show the way to improving the conditions of "colored folk" throughout the world. The propaganda was aimed at the ghetto petty bourgeoisie—themselves driven into poverty by the Depression.

The movement found its own theoreticians to justify such a scheme, cloaking it in pseudo-revolutionary terms designed to appeal to poverty-stricken Blacks. Foremost among these theoreticians was the renegade George Padmore, apostate communist, whose numerous articles appeared throughout the Black press.[14]

It is a credit to the Party's correct strategy and tactics in the Black freedom front, along with our revolutionary line, that these tendencies remained as scattered, local organizations, never able to unite nationally as Garvey's UNIA had. We knew that to maintain their credibility among the masses, these nationalists had in some way to struggle against the system. To this extent, we would unite with them in a principled way, while criticizing their idealist schemes.

Our purpose in this was to better be in a position to lead the broad masses, many of whom, having genuine national aspirations, were temporarily taken in by these utopian escapist nationalists.

PETTY BOURGEOIS NATIONALISM IN THE PARTY

From this account of the programs and activities of the various brands of utopian Black nationalism, I addressed myself to the struggle against the ideological influences of these movements in the Party. This was a touchy question. It was the first time this question had been dealt with in such a forthright manner. We had spoken much of white chauvinism, the main danger, and our tasks in relation to it. There had been a considerable strengthening of this fight, but there was still much room for improvement. But little had been said about petty bourgeois nationalism within our own ranks. It was not surprising that the pressure of the growing wave of "ghetto nationalism" should find expression in the Party. There was a tendency among some Black comrades to surrender to the propaganda of the local nationalists. This was revealed in St. Louis in connection with the pro-Japanese movement and in Harlem in respect to the Jobs for Negroes campaign.

After all, there was no Chinese wall between the Party and the masses. Just as the ruling class ideology of white supremacy had its influences on white comrades, it was not unusual that Black comrades would be similarly affected by petty bourgeois nationalist ideology.

These moods and sentiments were expressed in feelings of distrust of white comrades, in skepticism about the possibility of winning white workers to active support in the struggle for Black rights, and in the attitude that nothing could be accomplished until white chauvinism was completely eliminated. This latter was particularly dangerous because it failed to understand that white chauvinism could only be broken down in the process of struggle.

But more than a mood or a sentiment was the beginning of a theoretical rationale represented in the contention that even to raise the question of bourgeois nationalism would weaken the struggle against white supremacy. I denounced this dangerous counterposing of the fight against white chauvinism to the struggle against bourgeois nationalism. Of course white chauvinism was the main danger, but communists could not be content with mere formula. As Stalin had said when dealing with a similar controversy concerning great Russian chauvinism and local nationalism in the Soviet Union:

> It would be foolish to attempt to give ready-made recipes suitable for all times and for all conditions as regards the chief and the lesser danger. Such recipes do not exist. The chief danger is the deviation against which we have ceased to fight, thereby allowing it to grow into a danger to the state.[15]

The fact that white chauvinism was the main danger by no means implied that bourgeois nationalism, under certain conditions, could not become the main danger in a particular situation in the development of our work among Blacks. No one could deny that this was the situation that developed in St. Louis and in Harlem. Our experience in these struggles showed that bourgeois nationalism, if not fought, could become the main obstacle to advancing our work among Blacks.

The struggle against white chauvinism and petty bourgeois nationalism went hand-in-hand. It was necessary to struggle on two fronts, for both deviated from the line of proletarian internationalism. Stalin correctly stated: "If you want to keep both deviations under fire, then aim primarily against this source, against those who depart from internationalism."[16]

I tried to hit home sharply to the delegates that the most dangerous forms of petty bourgeois nationalism in the Party were not its open expressions, but rather its hidden forms. The clearest example was the case of Comrade Nowell in Detroit. The Central Committee had definite information that Nowell had become a center around which these tendencies in the Party gravitated and from whom comrades who erred in this direction found the greatest encouragement. Nowell had spread veiled inferences that some Black comrades who were carrying out the work of the Party were Uncle Toms. He had attempted to use all difficulties and shortcomings of the Party to disrupt and to undermine morale—particularly among the newer comrades.

I denounced Nowell's activities, charging that they created an atmosphere in which stoolpigeons and provocateurs could carry on their best work.[17]

I was now at the summation of my report. It was clear, I said, that the struggle against reformism in the Black movement, including bourgeois and petty bourgeois nationalist influences, could go forward only on the basis of an all-round strengthening of our work among the Black masses. The increased activities of the reformist leaders could only be met and defeated on the basis of the widest application of our united front tactics. This meant that we had to penetrate reformist-led mass organizations on the basis of immediate and specific demands of the Black masses. Thus we could draw the people into struggle over the heads of the treacherous reformist and bourgeois nationalist leaders.

This whole situation confronted us with the necessity of immediately strengthening the leadership of the proletariat and the Party in the Black liberation movement. Black industrial workers were then, and remain today, the most powerful, resolute and consistently revolutionary force in the Black movement. It is only under their leadership and that of its communist vanguard that the Black united front can maintain a consistently anti-imperialist character, unite with the multinational working class, and eventually overthrow imperialism.

Such a strategy called for a radical improvement in our trade union and shop work. We had to energetically take up the struggle for the day-to-day demands of Black workers in every struggle. This also had to be done by the Unemployed Councils. On this basis we could immediately carry through energetic and sustained recruitment of Black workers into our revolutionary trade unions, into the revolutionary opposition within the AFL. Simultaneously, it was necessary to carry through a bold policy of drawing the most militant element among them into the leadership of the trade union and unemployed work. The whole question of developing cadres among Blacks had to be more rapidly pushed forward in the Party, as well as in the revolutionary mass organizations.

This drive for the strengthening of our work among the basic sections of the Black working class was connected with the intensification of the struggle along the whole front of Black liberation. In this we had to immediately push forward the campaign for Black political rights, against lynch terror and all forms of persecution, for the freedom of the Scottsboro Boys, Angelo Herndon and others. I called for centering this campaign around the LSNR's Bill of Civil Rights for the Negro People. A mass petition drive for the bill was to have been immediately launched and connected with the development of mass actions in all localities.

In the South, we had to strengthen our concentration work in the key industries—steel, coal, textile and tobacco. We had to build up the Party, revolutionary trade unions and the opposition movement within the AFL on the basis of drawing Black and white workers into joint struggle. Our demands should have focused on the needs of the masses: against the NRA differentials, discrimination and increased fascist attacks upon the rights of Black and white workers. Simultaneously, we had to take steps to strengthen the movement of sharecroppers and poor farmers against the cotton plow-under, the Bankhead Bill—against the whole system of semi-feudal slavery of the agrarian masses.

It was necessary to further develop our revolutionary agrarian program, in the center of which must be the slogan of "confiscation of the land of the big white landlords and capitalists" in favor of the Black and white tillers.

In all this work, it was necessary to bring forth more energetically our full program for Black liberation: equal rights, the right of self-determination and confiscation of the land. We had to carry through the widest popularization of the achievements of the Soviet Union in the solution of the national question. Likewise, it was important not only to popularize the program of the Communist International for the Black colonies in Africa and the West Indies, but to develop actions in support of the revolutionary movement in these colonies against imperialism.

In building a united front from below with the masses of Black toilers in the reformist-led organizations, we had to guard against any leftist distortion of our line, any tendency to lump the masses in these organizations together with their leaders. This would play directly into the hands of petty bourgeois and bourgeois misleaders, inevitably leading towards our isolation. On the contrary, it was absolutely necessary in our approach to these masses to make a clear distinction between them and their leaders.

At the same time, we had to be equally alert against the right opportunist tendency to underestimate the class role of Black reformism. Such a tendency would lead to lagging at the tail of reformist and reactionary nationalist leaders, weakening proletarian hegemony and Party leadership of the Black liberation movement.

An effective struggle against reformist leaders and the winning of the masses from their reactionary influence demanded once and for all, that we seriously take up the task of building the LSNR into an independent mass organization around the Party's program of struggle for Black liberation.

Only on the basis of building up our work along these lines, would we be able to weld that unbreakable unity of Black and white toilers. My report lasted two hours and was considered a highlight of the convention. I received a standing ovation. By a motion of a delegate from Michigan, my report—"The Road to Negro Liberation"—was published in pamphlet form. I was later placed on the Politburo as a result of this speech.

LOOKING BACK

Before the Party could take the lead in the Black liberation movement, it had to demonstrate in action to Blacks that their deeply rooted distrust of white workers—nurtured by race riots and discrimination, and encouraged by established leaders—was an obstacle to united action in the crisis.

The Party was able to do this because it had a comprehensive program to deal with the crisis and the other groups did not. In Scottsboro, the Party effectively discredited the legalistic strategy of the NAACP—its reliance on courts, lawyers and liberal politicians. It was in our day-to-day work in the northern ghettos, the unemployment demonstrations, the campaigns against evictions and police brutality, and in struggles to organize nondiscriminatory unions, that the Party won hegemony over the local bourgeois nationalist organizations. Such movements were springing up at the time in Chicago, New York, Baltimore, St. Louis, Washington and Detroit.

These nationalist and separatist organizations exploited the antagonisms which inevitably developed between Blacks and white immigrants in neighboring ghettos. This was further exacerbated by the presence of white immigrant shop keepers in the Black community.

But the nationalists failed to take two factors into account. First, that the Depression was driving many of these white immigrant groups into desperation and moving them to the left; and second, that the Party was waging a relentless struggle against white chauvinism in its own ranks and in the mass organizations it participated in.

The Unemployed Councils, the TUUL unions and the ILD—all active in the early Depression—enrolled large numbers of whites in struggle on the platform which proclaimed full equality for Blacks and resistance to all forms of discrimination in employment, in distribution of relief and in the courts. Moreover, the Scottsboro Campaign demonstrated, as Adam Clayton Powell pointed out, that there were hundreds of thousands of white workers throughout the country and the world who would go to meetings and demonstrations, and even get arrested to protect eight Black youth from a "legal lynching." These actions helped to demonstrate that the white workers were willing, under Party leadership, to struggle against their own chauvinism and support the special demands of the Black liberation struggle.

But equally important was the fact that the Party's program was far more effective than that of the nationalists in winning relief for the Black community in the face of unemployment and high rents. The nationalists struggled for the right to all jobs in the Black community, but most Blacks worked outside the ghetto. Even if the nationalists succeeded, the number of jobs they could win would only reach a fraction of the Black unemployed. In contrast, the Party's demonstrations, such as sit-ins at relief offices, won immediate relief for hundreds of thousands of unemployed Blacks in cities throughout the country—in Birmingham, Richmond, New York, Chicago—in almost every major urban center. The Party's mass demonstrations brought results, and along with our defense of Black political prisoners and the struggle against white chauvinism, it won us the respect of the Black masses throughout America. Large numbers of Black workers and intellectuals were attracted to our ranks.

In my position as the head of the Negro Department, I tried to guide this two-pronged ideological struggle—against bourgeois assimilationism on the one hand, and petty bourgeois and bourgeois nationalism on the other. The success of this ideological struggle in the Black community was dependent upon a relentless and continuous struggle against white chauvinism by white communists and effective practical mass work by the Party in the north and South. From 1930-35, both of these conditions existed, and we became the single most effective and respected organization in the national Black community.

The Eighth Party Convention called for building the LSNR into a mass organization. We felt the need for a Black-led revolutionary organization to counter the NAACP leaders who were attempting a comeback after Scottsboro. They wanted to divert the mass trend toward militant confrontation back into channels of reliance on capitalist courts and legislative bodies. Towards this end, they were trumpeting the Costigan-Wagner Anti-Lynch Bill in an effort to regain their lost prestige. Not only did they seek to confine the struggle to legislative channels and bolster faith in the capitalist institutions, they sought support for a bill which in effect could be used as a weapon against the struggles of workers.

Immediately upon my return to New York we launched a campaign to rebuild the LSNR. We called a meeting of the national council of the organization. At this meeting Langston Hughes, who had recently returned from the Soviet Union, was elected president. I was elected national secretary, relieving Richard B. Moore who was in ill health. Ben Davis, Jr., just up from Atlanta, was made the editor of the *Liberator* (formerly the *Harlem Liberator*) which now became the official organ of the LSNR. Davis was replacing Maude White who was sent to Cleveland as a Party section organizer.

DETROIT'S SCOTTSBORO

As a first step towards rebuilding the organization, I went on a speaking tour of midwest industrial centers and addressed successful mass rallies in Detroit, Cleveland, Chicago and St. Louis.

These rallies were sponsored by local LSNR groups, in some cases jointly with the International Labor Defense. The burning civil rights issue in these cities was police terror against the Black community. One of the most glaring examples I encountered was in Detroit. There the Party and the LSNR chapter were in the midst of a campaign to defend James Victory, a Black World War I veteran, charged with robbery and assault with intent to murder a white woman.

The situation was building up to a race riot. Detroit was a virtual company town of the auto magnates and allied business interests. They controlled the government, the police and press. At the same time the city was a key concentration of pro-fascist elements. Foremost among these were Detroit's own radio priest, Father Coughlin, and his followers. The Rev. Gerald L.K. Smith, one of Huey Long's chief lieutenants, had also settled in Detroit. The area was also a Ku Klux Klan stronghold and the home base of the notorious Black Legion—a split-off from the KKK. These and various other local hate groups all engaged in fanning the flames of racial and national hatred among the city's polyglot labor force, consisting of Poles (the largest foreign-born element), a large contingent of Southern poor whites and Blacks.

The frame-up of James Victory occurred in the midst of one of the most vicious campaigns of racist incitement in Detroit's history. It was launched by the police department under the leadership of Colonel Pickert, in conjunction with the employer-controlled press of the city. For two weeks the news media and especially the yellow sheet, the *Detroit Times,* carried on a vicious drive of slanderous race-baiting in which Blacks were depicted as natural rapists, voodooists, murderers and all-round thugs who were conspiring to assault white women.

The police department issued special instructions to arrest on sight Blacks found in white neighborhoods. Col. Pickert boasted that an average of fifty arrests a day were made. This frenzied manhunt finally culminated in the arrest and frame-up of James Victory, who was made a target for the whole campaign of lynch hysteria.

The local LSNR and the ILD immediately came to the defense of Victory. When I arrived they were in the process of building a united front defense committee. From the outset, we saw that the terror campaign and the frame-up of the innocent worker Victory had a two-fold purpose: on the one hand, to intensify the oppression of Blacks and on the other, to divide and split the workers and in this way to forestall the growing tide of working class struggle against the auto lords.

The defense committee formulated demands which included an immediate end to the terror campaign and manhunt, immediate release of Victory, withdrawal of special police details from Black neighborhoods, freedom of speech and movement for Black people in all parts of the city, an end to discrimination in relief and on the job, and a call for united action of Black and white toilers against the common oppressor.

A series of meetings were called, resolutions and telegrams poured down on the city officials. A tremendous mass struggle developed to defend Victory.

I spoke at a large mass rally held at the Israel Baptist Church along with Rev. Graham, John Bollens of the Union Theological Seminary, and William Weinstone, district organizer of the Communist Party. I remember comrades at this meeting and activists in the campaign included Joe Billups, head of the LSNR chapter; LeBron Simmons, a young Black law student and his brother John; and Nat Ganley, trade union director for the Party. In my speech I placed the defense of James Victory in the context of the overall struggle for Black rights, emphasizing that success could only be achieved through revolutionary mass struggle of Black and white workers. I scored Black reformists who stood aloof from the struggle and refused to say anything about the crying injustices and insults perpetrated against Black people.

The committee retained the famous labor attorney Maurice Sugar to defend James Victory. At the trial, Sugar made a brilliant and militant defense, breaking down the prosecution's lies and fabrications and exposing the flimsy character of the frame-up. The mass protest, combined with Sugar's legal defense, resulted in the freeing of James Victory. This important triumph was testimony to the need for mass struggle in defense of Black rights and stood in sharp contrast to the reformist treachery of the NAACP leadership.

I left Detroit in high spirits. My next stop was Chicago, where I addressed a mass meeting called by the American Consolidated Trades Council. The meeting was part of a campaign for employment of Black construction workers on the DuSable High School building project.

Chicago was followed by stops in St. Louis, Cleveland and Kansas City. Following the tour, there was a short spurt of activity by LSNR chapters, but this soon petered out. Soon the only active chapters left were in Harlem and the Southside of Chicago. It was not long before it became clear to me that the LSNR as a national organization was dead and could not be revived.

What had happened? Why had the LSNR never really gotten off the ground as a broad, mass organization?

Its failure was inevitable, inherent in the organizational structure and program of the LSNR as it had been conceived. Its founding conference in the fall of 1930 had adopted a program and manifesto which included the full program of the Communist Party on the Afro-American question, including destruction of the plantation system, confiscation of land without compensation, and right of self-determination in the Black Belt. It had called for affiliation of other organizations to the LSNR on the basis of support for this complete program. The obvious result of these rigid demands was that no other groups would affiliate with the LSNR. LSNR branches of individual members were small, sectarian groups made up almost entirely of CP members and close sympathizers. Little effort was made to build the LSNR as a true united front body, organizing joint actions around immediate issues. Thus, the LSNR remained a small, isolated group.

These programmatic roadblocks were accompanied by problems of white chauvinism in the Party. Within Party circles, the LSNR became an excuse for failing to tackle head-on the Afro-American question and white chauvinism. Some even called the LSNR the "Negro Party." This assumed the battle for Black rights could be left to a Black party—rather than being a priority for both whites and Blacks within one party. There was a tendency to defer questions in the field to the LSNR and this became a cover for a white chauvinist underestimation of the Afro-American question. It allowed many comrades to neatly side-step dealing with white chauvinism and the revolutionary importance of the Black struggle. In this sense, the LSNR actually became an obstacle to the mobilization of the entire Party for Afro-American work.

For all these reasons the LSNR did not become the mass organization as it was originally conceived. It remained essentially a paper organization, and all our belated attempts to revive it were failures. The LSNR as a national organization ceased to exist. The last issue of *The Liberator* appeared at the end of 1934. A few branches, those clearly associated with local issues, survived.

In 1936, the LSNR was superseded by the National Negro Congress, a genuine united front organization of which I will speak in later chapters.

Chapter 17

Chicago: Against War and Fascism

Back in New York, I began to take stock of myself as a Party leader. I had risen rapidly in the Party hierarchy during the four years since my return from the Soviet Union. I was now a member of the Politburo and head of the National Negro Department. Despite the importance of my post, I was dissatisfied with my own personal development. True, I was regarded as a promising young theoretician. But I felt a lack of experience in direct mass work.

Although the general orientation of the Negro Commission was towards promoting mass activities in the field of Afro-American work, I found my job mainly confined to inner-Party activities. My actual work included checking on the work of the districts, particularly the Negro Commissions that existed on each district level, consulting with district leaders, training cadres, organizing education on the Afro-American question for national and district training schools and preparing resolutions and articles on the question. I had little contact with the masses outside the Party. Therefore, I had originally welcomed the decision to build the LSNR with myself as national secretary. I had expected it to be an opportunity to get into mass work. The failure of the LSNR, however, had eliminated that opportunity.

I was increasingly tied down to the office on the ninth floor of the Party's national headquarters on Twelfth Street in lower Manhattan and faced the specter of becoming an internal Party functionary or bureaucrat.

In this situation my relations with James Ford became strained. Ford was the only other Black Politburo member and now headed the Party's Harlem organization, a major concentration point in the Party's work among Blacks. Ford and I had disagreements over such things as assignments of cadres, but I felt the main cause of friction was Ford's personal ambition. Ford was a man of considerable organizational ability, but Browder was able to play on his weaknesses and use him as a vehicle for winning the Black cadre to his developing liquidationist line on the Afro-American question. Thus, Ford, supported by Browder, built a power base—almost a clique—in Harlem.

I felt it was impossible to work in this atmosphere. Thus I requested to be transferred to Chicago, something I had thought about before these tensions had matured. My request was approved in late 1934 and I left New York for Chicago. After my departure, Ford, with Abner Berry's assistance, took over as responsible head of the Negro Department.

As head of the Negro Department, I had kept in close touch with the Chicago comrades. The Party in Chicago was beginning to grow. A large number of recruits were from the disintegrating Garvey movement, obviously attracted by the Party's work among the unemployed, Scottsboro, and its program in favor of the right to self-determination.

Chicago was the country's second largest Black city and had the greatest concentration of Black industrial workers. In the early thirties, the city was the scene of some of the fiercest battles of the unemployed.

In the summer of 1930, the city was the site of the founding convention of the National Unemployed Councils. Led by communists, the councils fought for relief in cash and jobs, unemployment insurance, public works jobs at union wages, hot lunches for school children, a moratorium on evictions and an end to discrimination against Blacks. Chicago's first Unemployed Council was formed on the Southside in the fall of 1930, with Black workers playing a leading role. Blacks constituted eleven percent of the city's population, but were one-fourth of all the relief cases in the city. Chicago's Southside Blacks were among the worst sufferers of the Depression.

Chicago's unemployed, led by the Communist Party, were exemplary in carrying out energetic activities and demonstrations. Some 50,000 marched through the Loop to Grant Park in the summer of 1931, halting traffic and forcing police to back off from a planned confrontation. Earlier that summer there was a mammoth march on the state capital in Springfield demanding that relief cutbacks be restored.

But the real growth and consolidation of the movement followed the police murder of four Black workers (Abe Gray, John O'Neil, Thomas Paige and Frank Armstrong) as they attempted to prevent the eviction of a seventy-year-old Black widow, Dianna Gross. This event—known as the Chicago massacre—occurred when police opened fire into a large crowd which was trying to put the woman's furniture back into her home.

A local Party leader who was on the spot at the time described the tremendous demonstrations and actions that surrounded these brutal murders. The funeral of Gray and O'Neil was the greatest demonstration of Black and white solidarity that she had ever witnessed. Crowds of white people poured into State Street in solidarity with their Black brothers. They marched from Thirty-first Street, behind the coffins, south to the Englewood Station where the bodies were put aboard a train to return to their homes in the South.

The crowd just took over State Street—there wasn't a cop in sight. As people walked, they carried open sheets with them; the crowds watching on the sidewalk threw money into the sheets, to help defray the families' expenses. We estimated over 30,000 people were there. For a considerable period of time following this march, the evictions were halted and the unemployment movement grew in leaps and bounds.[1]

There was a direct relationship in Chicago between this growth and our work on Scottsboro. The case had a tremendous impact on the Black community there. White comrades doing work among the unemployed told us that the case was really an entrée into the community. Once people knew that they were communists, they were accepted because communists were always associated with

Scottsboro. The normal suspicion of whites in the Black community was greatly lessened.

The city administration's answer to this growing movement was unbridled police terror. A tool of the corrupt city government and allied with gangsters, Chicago's police force undoubtedly held the record for terror and lawlessness against workers. They were unsurpassed for sadism and brutality, regularly raiding the halls and offices of the Unemployed Councils, revolutionary organizations and the Party—smashing furniture, beating workers in the halls, on the streets and in the precinct stations. Hundreds were arrested.

In 1930, the police murdered Lee Mason, a Black communist candidate for Congress. Harold Williams, a Party organizer in the Southside and an old schoolmate of mine from Moscow, was viciously beaten. Although hospitalized, he never fully recovered and died a few years later in New York.

It took courage and on occasion ingenuity to thwart the police terror aimed at forcibly stifling and demoralizing the workers' movement. One example of both was Herbert Newton, a Black member of the Central Committee and Party organizer in the Southside. On one occasion he was speaking before a large crowd in Ellis Park. The police arrived, determined to stop Newton from speaking and to break up the meeting. But Newton, moving quickly, climbed up an old oak tree and kept right on talking. As the *Daily Worker* reported: "Some of the uniformed killers tried to climb up after him, but their graft-swollen bellies interfered."[2] The crowd laughed as they left and Newton climbed down.

When I arrived in Chicago late in 1934, the Depression was in its fourth year. The determined mass struggle had wrung some concessions from the Roosevelt government and the spirit of the people was raised by these victories.

I stepped off the train on a wintery day in late fall. I was greeted by a surprise welcoming committee including Claude Lightfoot, Katy White and John Gray. They informed me of a banquet they had planned for that evening to welcome me to the district. During the day I visited with my family.

The hall that evening was filled. There were comrades from the district—many of whom I already knew and with whom I was to work in the coming months. There was Morris Childs, district organizer and former Lenin School classmate; Bea Shields, educational director; and Joe Weber, leader of the unemployed movement. From the Southside came Claude Lightfoot, a YCL leader; David Poindexter from the LSNR; Brown Squire, from the packing houses; Delia Page, active in the unemployed work; Oliver Law, head of the Southside ILD; and other stalwarts. I knew I was among old friends. The speakers were enthusiastic, pledging support for the work on the Southside. They called on all the comrades to intensify their efforts and give me their full support. I was somewhat embarrassed by the overwhelming warmth and comradeship shown that evening and left in high spirits.

Greetings from another source came the next morning. I was speaking at a demonstration in front of the "Fortress of Misery" relief station at 505 East 50th Street. A police patrol wagon drove up, several cops jumped out and rushed the speaker's stand. They dragged me off and hustled me, along with Tom Trent (Hyde Park YCL organizer) and Edelman (a young white University of Chicago student), off to the Forty-eighth Street Precinct Station. They booked us on disorderly conduct or some such ridiculous charge. We then were taken to the Twelfth Street Detective Bureau for fingerprinting and "mugging." Here was my first encounter with Lt. Murphy of Chicago's Red Squad.

"Oh, *you're* the new nigger red from New York who they've been banqueting. Well, when we get through with you, you'll wish you were back east. By the way, how's old Williams doing?" (He was referring here to the severe beating that Harold Williams had received in 1931.)

They drove us back to the Forty-eighth Street Station and threw us in a cell. Shortly after, two plainclothesmen appeared. "You Haywood?" they asked. "Captain Mooney wants to see you." They guided me towards the office and on the way one asked, "You ever met Captain Mooney? Well, you're going to meet him now and I'd hate to be in your shoes." (Mooney later led the Republic Steel Massacre of 1937.)

As they led me through the door, I saw Mooney—big, red-faced and brutal looking—sitting behind the desk. "So you're Haywood—you goddamn nigger son-of-a-bitch, we'll banquet you all right! Now take him away!"

A few hours later I was taken back to see Mooney and the same scene was repeated. In late afternoon we were taken out and lined up in front of the guards as the shift changed. There were several Black cops among them. "Now get a good look at these three," Mooney told them. "They're around here trying to stir up the poor colored people. Whenever you see them, I want you to run 'em in."

After spending the day in jail we were brought before the magistrate, fined and released.

The greetings were over, it was now time to get down to work. Chicago District Eight included all of Illinois, parts of Wisconsin, Indiana, Iowa and Missouri. I was installed as Southside regional organizer. My region included the Southside Black Belt wards, Hyde Park and Englewood. At the same time, I was elected chairman of the Cook County Committee of the Party.

When I first arrived the mass struggles, particularly of the unemployed, had ebbed from the peak reached a year or so earlier. Strikes and unemployed marches throughout the country had wrenched limited concessions in the form of the first round of New Deal legislation—the National Industrial Recovery Act, Agricultural Adjustment Act, etc. The national economy had improved somewhat—profits had risen significantly, production was fifteen percent higher than the low point of 1932, and unemployment had dropped three million, although over thirteen million remained jobless. These factors all helped to ease the situation of the masses somewhat. But this upturn didn't affect Southside Blacks much. Last hired, fifty percent were unemployed, as compared with only twenty-four percent of whites.

At the same time, these improvements signaled a new offensive by monopoly capital. With the depth of the crisis behind them, they were now confident they could put an end to the reforms they had temporarily accepted and move the country in a fascist direction. The Supreme Court declared key New Deal programs unconstitutional. Roosevelt chose to move a "little left of center" to strengthen his position among the workers, and presented the Congress with a second round of New Deal legislation—Works Progress Administration (WPA), the Wagner Act (National Labor Relations Act, which guaranteed labor's right to organize), the Social Security Act (which established small federal benefits for the aged and the unemployed).

The lull in mass activity, the growing conflicts in the ruling class, and the rapidly changing international situation marked the beginning of a new period. All the struggles of the future would be marked by the growing threat of fascism—at home and abroad—and our tactics would change accordingly.

We felt that what was needed was a clear program of action embracing the Black masses together with white toilers, aimed at building a broad united front movement. After much discussion in the region, a plan of action was adopted. It called for concentration on the three most pressing issues of the time: relief, high rents and the high cost of living. We called for a special focus on the rights of Blacks for whom, because of Jim Crow, suffering was particularly sharp. We organized around the slogans of "Drive down rents!" "Abolish rent differences in Negro and white neighborhoods!" "Increase cash relief!" "Smash Jim Crow methods of relief distribution!"

HANDS OFF ETHIOPIA

On July 25, 1935, the historic Seventh Congress of the Communist International opened in Moscow and met in session until August 21. The U.S. Party sent a strong delegation, including an impressive group of Black comrades. Among them were Ben Careathers, Pittsburgh's "Rock of Gibraltar"; Claude Lightfoot (I was happy to see him go to further his political experience); the sharecropper leader and organizer Al Murphy.

From Chicago, we followed the proceedings of the congress closely. How to prevent fascism, and how to overthrow it where it already had come to power, were the questions facing the Congress. In his main report, Georgi Dimitrov, hero of the

Reichstag fire trial, defined fascism as "the open terrorist dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinistic and most imperialist elements of finance capital."[3]

The congress called upon the parties to build broad people's fronts against war and fascism. These anti-fascist fronts would include workers and farmers, intellectuals and all democratic sections of the population. The parties were urged to take into consideration the changed conditions in the world situation, and to apply the united front tactics in a new manner. While pointing out the need for such broad unity, at the same time Dimitrov warned against the communist parties' losing their independence and freedom of action and abdicating their leading role within the anti-fascist front.

In February 1935, Italian troops were already massing in Eritrea, obviously preparing to invade. By summer, Italy openly proclaimed its goal of annexing Ethiopia. The fascist threat to Ethiopia aroused deep anger in the Black communities throughout the country. Anticipating the call of the Seventh Congress, we Southside communists seized the initiative to build a broad united front struggle against the growing threat of war and fascism. An emergency Southside conference was held on July 10, 1935, to plan a campaign to defend and support Ethiopia. The response was overwhelming. Over 1,100 delegates attended, representing all manner of Black community organizations: churches, lodges, clubs, Black nationalist groups and the Black YWCA, as well as a number of Italian anti-fascist groups.

Revolutionary-led organizations such as the ILD, the Unemployed Councils and the League Against War and Fascism, as well as the Communist and Socialist Parties, took part. It was a genuine citywide people's front with the Southside as its base.

From this enthusiastic conference, the Joint Committee for the Defense of Ethiopia was formed. Plans were immediately launched for a mass "Hands Off Ethiopia" parade on August 31, 1935, and a petition drive for 500,000 signatures calling upon Congress to invoke the Kellogg Peace Pact and embargo arms shipments to Italy. A demonstration was also called in front of the Italian Consulate on North Wells Street before the August 31 parade.

For Black Americans, Ethiopia had always been a symbol of freedom and independence in history and folklore. Masses of Black people strongly supported Ethiopia. Their readiness to defend Ethiopia from fascist invasion was linked to the struggle against the enemy at home. The defense of Ethiopia inevitably became a fight against the growth of fascism right in Chicago, against every petty persecution, Jim Crow degradation, misery and discrimination.

The city administration made this strikingly clear by immediately refusing to grant a parade permit for the "Hands Off Ethiopia" march. Mayor Kelly, who had just received an award from Mussolini himself, sought to justify this denial on the political grounds that the parade would be an affront to Italy—a "friendly power." (Ethiopia, while friendly, was not considered a power.) But the underlying reason for their fear was what might happen if the Black masses took to the streets—the specter of the massive 1931-32 unemployed upsurge which had shaken Chicago's Southside was still with them. The police and administration knew only too well that the deep-rooted emotion of the Blacks in Chicago for defense of Ethiopia could very quickly develop into a new wave of mass actions among the jobless starving families around the relief stations and against their domestic oppressors in the steel mills and stockyards.

It was evident that the Kelly administration brought pressure upon the joint committee and caused a number of ministers to bolt the coalition. Among them was the Reverend J.O. Austin, minister of the Pilgrim Baptist Church, one of the largest Black churches in the city and host to the July conference. The reformist leaders were afraid of the "red menace," afraid that they could no longer control the movement.

This temporary setback caused us to make a closer evaluation of our united front activity. We had relied too much on building the united front through negotiations at the top and had not emphasized mobilizing the Party to work in the reformist-led mass organizations—churches, lodges and unions. We had clearly underestimated the importance of work within these organizations. After a sucessful fight against these tendencies, we were able to rebuild the joint committee on a new basis, continuing our efforts to organize for the August 31 demonstration.

Our plan for escalating actions began on August 14, when more than 2,000 Black and white workers attended three mass rallies on the Southside. I remember that on this occasion, young comrades in the YCL and the Young Liberators (a communist-led predominantly Black youth organization) hanged an effigy of Mussolini to the cheers of hundreds in the crowd.

A planning conference on August 19 at Lincoln Center drew together more than sixty-five delegates and many more unofficial observers and visitors from forty organizations. Rev. Kinsley of the Church of the Good Shepherd was elected chairman of the joint committee and Arthur Falls, prominent young Black surgeon, became its secretary. Delegations were chosen to visit leading churches and community organizations on the Southside to mobilize thousands for the upcoming parade. Everyone attending got copies of the call and "Hands Off Ethiopia" buttons to take back to their organizations.

The following day, a delegation chosen at the planning meeting once again visited Mayor Kelly to demand a permit to march. Once again, we were refused. The coalition had by now received the endorsements of the local Socialist Party and executive council of the Chicago AFL.

The actions continued with a protest at the Italian Consulate. I was among a delegation who met with the consul to demand immediate withdrawal of Italian troops from Africa.

The young comrades on the outside who were very adept at this type of dramatic action carried on a demonstration during lunch hour. Two young girls, one white and one Black, were handcuffed to a light pole in front of the consulate. They wore white sweatshirts on which were printed the slogans, "Down with Mussolini, Hands Off Ethiopia!" It took the police ten or twenty minutes to file through their chains, enough time for a huge lunch hour crowd to gather and for them to make speeches and shout slogans. Sidewalk as well as street traffic was blocked. To add to the confusion of the police, others showered the crowd with leaflets from the nearby elevated station.

We had other flash actions in the downtown area. A hundred or so of us would blend in with the crowd in the busy Loop area and at a signal from the leader would draw out hidden placards and leaflets. I could see the looks of amazement and disbelief on the faces of the cops when this happened. Having received no instructions from their superiors, the police were shocked to see a full-sized sidewalk parade suddenly materialize seemingly from nowhere. After a few blocks, the demonstrators would discard their signs and disperse. All of these were build-ups for our August 31 parade.

This groundwork was successful. The entire Southside community was in a state of anticipation and in addition the Chicago Party organization had mobilized support from all sections of the city. But there was still one hitch. Mayor Kelly and Chief of Police Allman continued to reject our application for a parade permit. The joint committee sent delegation after delegation of prominent people, Black and white, but the chief was adamant—there would be no permit.

Such was the situation at the final meeting of our joint committee on Friday, the eve of the demonstration, where we were to make the final preparations for the parade. Lincoln Center was packed with people. Spirits were not dampened; we were determined to go on with the parade. As the Party's Southside spokesman, I was told that I made one of the most spirited speeches. It was unanimously decided that we would "assert our democratic rights" and march in defiance of the police ban.

Parade marshals were appointed and the line of march mapped out. The meeting adjourned amid defiant speeches. But we communists were under no illusions. We knew that the police would not even allow us to assemble. Our intelligence had informed us that 2,000 cops would concentrate in the assembly area, that all leaves had been canceled and extra duty assigned. They were preparing for a real showdown. The defense of Ethiopia had now become a fight for the streets of Chicago.

After the meeting adjourned, we communists got together. As I remember there was Morris Childs, David Poindexter, Oliver

Law, Tom Trent and myself. (Claude Lightfoot was in Moscow attending the Seventh Congress of the CI.) What we feared might happen was that the crowds would be dispersed without any kind of demonstration. We felt that this would be a demoralizing setback. Therefore we planned alternate demonstrations, dramatic actions of all sorts, including speaking from rooftops, burning of effigies of Mussolini, blocking traffic and other actions. In order to carry this out, our people had to get into the assembly area that night (it was already midnight when the meeting adjourned) and stay. We knew that no known communists would be allowed into the area the next day.

I chose to speak from the roof of a five-story hotel on the southwest corner of Forty-seventh and South Parkway. I went straight from the meeting and rented a room on the fifth floor of the hotel, concealing a megaphone in my bag. I woke early, went to the roof and surveyed the scene of the upcoming battle. It was a bright, warm day and I could see that the police—hundreds of them—were already forming their lines. A string of patrol wagons were visible near the "L" station, waiting to be filled. I went back to my room and a comrade brought me coffee and a newspaper and reported on what was going on. Around one o'clock I went back up to the roof. The streets were filled with shoppers, men and women returning from work.

Then the demonstrators began arriving; streams of them, striding expectantly down the steps from the "L" station. And the action began. The police assumed most whites getting off the "L" in this part of town, the heart of Black Chicago, must be there for the demonstration. They began indiscriminately herding them into patrol wagons and hustling them off to the station. They limited the arrests among Blacks to a few well-known leaders. The whole police plan was orchestrated by Mike Mills of the Chicago Red Squad. Their strategy was to spare Blacks the brunt of the attack because a direct attack in this part of town could set off a full-scale riot. In this way, they hoped to split the demonstrators and thus make it easier to disperse them.

From my vantage point, I could see the scene unfolding. Pandemonium broke loose—the streets were crowded with demonstrators and shoppers alike. As arrests were made, people began shouting protests and slogans. I saw Oliver Law jump up and begin addressing the crowd from a roof very near the "L" station.

This caught the police off guard and it took some time before they could get to him. But as soon as Law was pulled down and arrested, another speaker began on a roof across the street. This was repeated five or six times as the police moved frantically to silence the speakers. By this time, the crowd had grown considerably and the streets and sidewalks were jammed. Every time we would outsmart the police, a great roar would go up from the crowd—and every time another arrest was made, they would jeer the cops. Milton Howard, the *Daily Worker's* man-on-the-spot, described the scene.

> There were 2,000 uniformed police with revolvers and clubs lined up through a quarter mile radius from the corners where the demonstration was to have begun.
>
> But the 10,000 Negro and white enemies of war who gathered to raise their voices in solidarity with the independent Negro country facing the war menace of fascist troops were not easily intimidated. Driven and herded from one corner to another, dispersed by proddings from clubs and revolver butts, scattered groups held stubbornly the immediate neighborhood from the early afternoon far into the night so that hundreds of police had to set a ring of isolation around the area several blocks on either side, blocking all traffic in their fear of a demonstration. Despite provocations, the assembled thousands permitted no breach of their peaceful discipline. The only violence was the slugging of helpless prisoners by the police and detectives in police cars and vans.
>
> For many blocks on either side of Prairie and Forty-seventh Streets police cars guided by members of the "Red Squad" cruised everywhere, stopping and searching cars, seizing every white person in sight, chasing "suspicious" Negroes and whites down the alleys, swinging clubs and blackjacks in an organized sweep of brutality under the leadership of the "Red Squad" leader Lieutenant Mike Mills.

> At various corners, Forty-seventh Street and Calumet, Forty-seventh Street and South Park, Forty-sixth Street and other places, speakers arose to speak to crowds only to be dispersed and seized.[4]

All this time the police were pushing the crowd in my direction. Now the crowd was below my building. Just as they arrested the speaker on a rooftop opposite me, I leaped up and began speaking. Because of the huge crowd and the increasing confusion and frustration of the police, I remember speaking for ten, maybe even fifteen minutes. I exhorted the crowd that they had the right to march and parade, scoring Chicago's Mayor Kelly and Chief Allman for importing Mussolini's tactics into the Southside. Indeed, Kelly had merited the decoration bestowed upon him by his friend Mussolini.

Then I felt a blow on the back of my head and spun around to face four plainclothes cops with riot clubs. They started to beat me but one said, "Careful, don't bloody him up. We have to get back through that crowd down there." They gave me a few kicks and dragged me down the back stairs outside the hotel. On the last flight, my spirit rose when I caught sight of an angry crowd of Blacks milling around the alley. "Look at that crowd!" exclaimed one of the cops as they nervously drew their guns.

A big Black woman in the crowd hollered out, "Don't you hit him, you sons-of-bitches!" The cops waved their revolvers menacingly.

The crowd in the alley pulled back grudgingly. The police pushed me out the Forty-eighth Street side of the alley, commandeered a passing taxi and ordered the cabbie to drive to the Wabash Avenue Station. I remember their sighs of relief as the cab got under way. They turned their attention to me, methodically beating my legs and knees, cursing me with every blow.

When we arrived at the precinct station, I was flung into the bull pen, which was already filled with demonstrators, all white, excepting three or four Blacks. I received a few parting kicks as the cops shouted, "Here's Haywood, your leader."

To one side, I could see bloodied people staggering and limping through the door. They were being herded from the patrol wagons, forced to run through a gauntlet of club-wielding, sadistic goons. I glimpsed a woman named Anna, our Chicago district office manager, with blood cascading down her forehead. A *Chicago Defender* reporter witnessed the incredible scene:

> If the people who saw the police break up the parade were surprised at the brutality that went on all afternoon on 47th Street they would have been astonished at the downright savageness with which the police amused themselves at the Wabash Avenue Station. The patrol wagons gathered in such numbers in front of the station to hold up traffic on 48th Street. Prisoners were unloaded in the middle of the thoroughfare. On each side of the wagon formed a long double line of 15-30 police. The unfortunate prisoners were pulled out of the vehicle and forced to run the gauntlet. Their heads, shins and bodies were clubbed by policemen who yelped in glee at the bloody sight.[5]

In the cell, my legs suddenly fell out from under me. It was a delayed reaction to the beating I had received in the taxi. I could no longer stand. My fellow cell mates began yelling and chanting, demanding that they take the more severely injured out to the hospital.

Finally we were taken to the city hospital. Expecting some relief from my injuries, I was greeted by another hellish scene. The emergency room was filled with people injured in the demonstration. The student doctors attending the injured were having a great time.

"Hey, look at this one! What a beaut! Hey, you have to give them cops credit, they sure know how to swing a billy. Look here, cut wide open but no skull fracture—perfect!"

I was given a quick going-over. I was unable to walk but the doctor mumbled, "He'll be all right, now get him out of here." I was taken back to the cell block. By this time the Red Squad was busy screening out the over 500 arrested. Two cops were swaggering back and forth taunting us. "Goddamn Jews—stirring up all this trouble around here!" "There oughta be a Hitler over here."

"He's already here," someone yelled back.

A white man with his head in a bandage and blood stains on his shirt was explaining, "I'm just an insurance collector. I came over here on my regular rounds and look what happened."

Murphy, the Red Squad lieutenant, responded, "Oh, you don't look so bad, you'll be all right. We were protecting you—we just made a mistake. They must have thought you were one of those reds. You can go."

But there must have been a lot of "mistakes" that afternoon. When they finished, only thirty-five of us were charged with an offense. Late that night, bail was made and we were released. A Russian comrade, a huge man, picked me up and carried me like a baby to a waiting car and then to my apartment.

I was released on Saturday night. In its usual flamboyant and sensationalist style, the *Chicago Defender* reported that I was "beaten so badly that he may lose the use of his legs."[6] In fact, I did have to walk on crutches for a month as a result of the scientific beating from the Chicago police.

The Party immediately took the offensive against this attack, linking it directly with the growing fascist menace abroad. Morris Childs, the district organizer, made a militant statement to the press in which he declared that the people of Chicago were against the "imperialist plunder of an independent country," and would stand up for their right to say so freely. He called for a "united people's front against fascist reaction in this city,"[7] and urged the people of Chicago to flood the city with telegrams demanding the release of all demonstrators and an end to police suppression of political activity.

The Party called for a huge protest meeting the following Wednesday at Boulevard Hall on Forty-seventh Street. Despite the Red Squad's attempts at intimidation, it was packed with people. Speaking to the audience from a chair, as I was unable to stand, I told the audience that our demonstration had been a brilliant success in showing that the people of Chicago were ready to unite against war and fascism, both foreign and native, and in defense of their right to speak for peace.

There was indignation throughout the whole community about the police attack on our peaceful demonstration. A bi-racial committee of prominent citizens, including Dr. Arthur G. Falls, chairman of the Interracial Commission; attorney Edith Sampson, who later became a member of the U.S. delegation to the United Nations; A.L. Foster, secretary of the Chicago Urban League; and Robert Morse Lovett of the University of Chicago—was formed to investigate the police brutality. The committee urged that people send protest letters and phone calls to the mayor and to prominent members of the city administration.

The thirty-five of us who had been charged with inciting to riot demanded a jury trial. When we arrived in court, it was packed with our supporters. The prosecutor, on seeing the crowd, asked for the trial to be postponed. During the following weeks and months the D.A. asked for postponements each time our case came up. It was clear that they were trying to drag things out, hoping that the momentum of our support would die down.

This tactic of theirs imposed a hardship on us, for we had thousands of dollars tied up in bail which would not be returned until after the trial. The money was desperately needed for defense work elsewhere. Finally, we accepted the deal they offered of pleading guilty in exchange for settling the matter quickly and reducing the charges to disorderly conduct, thus releasing the bail money. This went along with the understanding that the sentence would be a fine of one dollar and one day in jail, which we had already served.

THE NATIONAL NEGRO CONGRESS

Our campaign in defense of Ethiopia helped lay the basis for the greatest Black united front movement of the period—the National Negro Congress. Founded in Chicago in mid-February 1936, the Congress brought together representatives of all classes in the national Black community, promoting unity in the struggle around the burning issues of Black rights.

Our activities on Ethiopia merged with preparations for the Congress. We were glad that Chicago had been chosen as the host city because it provided impetus for consolidating and extending our contacts and associations. The National Sponsoring Committee for the Congress, headed by John P. Davis who was then secretary of the Joint Committee on National Recovery, set up headquarters in Chicago. We also established a local sponsoring committee with Charles Wesley Burton, a well-known leader in Chicago's Black community, as chairman.

An office was opened on Chicago's Southside. We set up a speakers' bureau and organized canvassing teams which distributed throughout the city the congress call and thousands of copies of the pamphlet "Let Us Build the National Negro Congress." We approached local organizations for delegates to the congress. We were active in this preparatory work, and the result was reflected in an extremely large Chicago delegation.

The congress opened on Friday, February 15, at the Eighth Illinois Regiment Armory (my old World War I regiment). There was a large crowd milling around the entrance as Claude Lightfoot, Hank Johnson and I arrived, flanked by several Black notables.

I recognized our old Red Squad enemies, Mills and Murphy, standing off to the side and watching the scene. Not only hatred, but frustration and surprise showed on their faces. And why not? It had been their job to isolate and discredit us communists. Instead we had become respected members—even leaders—in the Black community. The overwhelming turnout and broad united front character of the Congress were testimony to their failure. But we were to learn that they were not yet finished with us.

The armory was jammed with over 5,000 delegates and visitors. Some 585 organizations from twenty-eight states and the District of Columbia were represented, sharecroppers and tenant farmers' unions, 246 trade unions, eighty church and civic organizations, youth groups, political parties, cultural and fraternal groups, and women's organizations. About eighty-five percent of those attending were Black.

A. Philip Randolph, Black trade unionist and president of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, gave the keynote address. He linked up the various issues in the Black community with the need for a united front organization. He pointed out the special significance of developing the anti-fascist movement and the need for special focus on organizing Blacks in industrial unions. He called for continuing and strengthening the "fight to break down the color line in the trade unions which now have it." He also urged independent political action in the form of a farmer-labor party.[8]

John P. Davis, secretary and a key organizer of the congress, stated its purpose and outlined the agenda for the meeting. Greetings of solidarity from many revolutionary movements throughout the world were read.

The one that excited me the most was that from Mao Tsetung, then provisional chairman of the Chinese Soviet Republic. The message read in part, "I greet...the First National Congress of the fighting Negro people, 12,000,000 strong in America against every form of national and racial oppression." He went on to condemn the fascist invasion of Ethiopia and add that "this struggle must spur you on to strengthen your ranks in a united fighting front, guided by the program of the militant Negro leaders which today raises its voice for a determined struggle for freedom." Chairman Mao concluded by sending greetings from Chou En-lai and Chu Teh.[9]

The next day was devoted to panel discussions and workshops. The large armory floor was covered with groups meeting to discuss particular issues and hammer out resolutions. The largest workshop was on the trade unions, reflecting the significant working class composition of the congress. The crucial importance of Southern Blacks was emphasized by Robert Wood, ILD organizer from Birmingham, and by Ozzie Hart, president of the Sharecroppers' Union.

Special sessions were held on fascism and war, civil liberties and police terror. One of the highlights of the congress was the appearance of Lij Tesfaye Zaphiro, special envoy of Ethiopia's London legation, who addressed the gathering.

The militant spirit and determination of the delegates was continually brought out on the floor. At every mention of the Scottsboro Boys and Angelo Herndon there were prolonged cheers. Tim Holmes, communist delegate from New York, led three cheers for the defense of Ethiopia, which shook the vast auditorium. When a resolution condemning the Hearst press and urging its boycott was unanimously adopted, the delegates staged a spontaneous demonstration in which every visible copy of the local Hearst sheet—the *Herald Examiner*—was torn to shreds and tossed in the air. Silence greeted the telegram from Mayor Kelly who conveniently found that he had scheduled an out of town meeting and would be unable to attend. When his replacement, Judge Burke, telegrammed that he was suddenly called to the bedside of his dying sister, the audience responded with prolonged derisive laughter.

On Sunday, the closing session established the congress as a permanent organization and called for the formation of local councils throughout the country. The thrust of the program was basically as outlined in the keynote address by Randolph, centering on active support of industrial unionism and the need to combat the growing threat of war and fascism.

The congress passed resolutions calling for the formation of Negro labor committees to oppose discriminatory practices in trade unions and to undertake organization of unorganized Black workers. The resolution read in part: "These Committees can be a powerful factor in the cause of Industrial Unionism and especially in mass production industry where there are many Blacks." Other resolutions supported sharecroppers' and tenant farmers' unions and called for social security benefits and improved unemployment relief.

On the front against war and fascism, the congress called for increased support of Ethiopia, passed a strong resolution opposing lynching and supporting the revised Costigan-Wagner Anti-Lynch Bill and calling for continued support of the Scottsboro Boys and Angelo Herndon.

The speakers at the closing session included Norman Thomas of the Socialist Party, Roy Wilkins of the NAACP, Lester Granger, chairman of the Urban League, and Angelo Herndon, who received an enthusiastic ovation. Randolph was elected president of the new organization.

Throughout the congress, we communists played an active role, participating on the numerous panels. James Ford stressed Black peoples' stake in the struggle for independent political action in the form of a farmer-labor party. Communists were on the local and national sponsoring committees. The seventy-member national council of the National Negro Congress elected at the conference included about ten communists.

Our participation during the entire three-day session was, however, somewhat hampered by continual harassment from the Chicago Red Squad. They set up a loose dragnet around the armory and jailed a number of comrades on their way to or from congress sessions. They held them without booking until the congress closed on Sunday. These comrades were mostly second-line leaders. The police knew any arrest of a well-known leader would have provoked large demonstrations and protests.

The Red Squad's disruptive activities were not confined to harassment outside, or to just the communists. They clearly sought to disrupt the work of the congress itself. Congress leaders faced daily threats of being thrown out of the meeting hall. In this, the Red Squad had an amenable accomplice in Col. Warfield, Black commander of the Eighth Illinois Regiment. He had obviously swallowed whole hog the Hearst propaganda accusations that the conference was organized and manipulated by the "reds" and was part of the "general plot" to overthrow the government by force and violence.

Col. Warfield had even escorted friends of his around the armory, showing them hidden machine guns with stand-by crews to back up any ultimatum to clear the hall. The colonel, whom I remember as a lieutenant during my Army days, was a "back-door relative" of Wallis Warfield. The old Virginia slave-holding family had recently gained some notoriety through their daughter's marriage to the Duke of Windsor. This connection had undoubtedly been helpful in the colonel's climb to eminence in Black bourgeois circles.

While this form of harassment failed, Warfield and his officers were successful in preventing Earl Browder from speaking at the closing session. Browder had been requested by the session's chairman to speak, but was prohibited by order of the Eighth Regiment officers. This announcement was received with strong disapproval by the assembled delegates. The issue, however, was not forced because it was the last session and just before adjournment.

In all, the conference was a huge success. All our local activities were given a real boost, especially so in Chicago with its large turnout at the conference. The Party's prestige was also bolstered and this was to be reflected in later campaigns like the steel drive and the electoral campaign of 1936.

THE NINTH PARTY CONVENTION

The Ninth Party Convention was held in New York City, June 24-28, 1936. The regular Party convention occupied the first three days and the last session, held in Madison Square Garden, was devoted to ratifying the national election platform and nominating candidates for the 1936 elections.

The 1936 elections, held in the midst of the continuing economic crisis, saw some of the most bitterly fought campaigns in American history. The dominant Wall Street monopolists, the Hearst papers, the most reactionary and fascist-minded sections of the ruling class, united behind the Alfred M. Landon/Col. Frank Knox slate in a determined effort to defeat Roosevelt and reverse the New Deal programs and gains made by the popular mass movement.

At the same time, agents of big business formed the Union Party which was designed to take votes away from Roosevelt and spread confusion among the populist-oriented voters. Self-declared fascists, Father Coughlin and Gerald L.K. Smith, were its major leaders, and William Lenke was its presidential candidate. Roosevelt, running on a pledge to continue the New Deal reforms, had substantial middle-class support and aid from more liberal-minded and anti-fascist sections of the ruling class.

This sharpening of contradictions in the U.S. ruling class was a reflection of the growing threat of fascism on a world scale. The fascist offensive at home was part of a similar offensive abroad: the formation of the Hitler-Mussolini-Hirohito axis, the invasion of northern China, the invasion of Ethiopia, the strengthening of Hitler's power in Germany and the growing threat of civil war in Spain.

In order to remain in the presidency, Roosevelt was forced to take a more progressive posture, moving to the left of the "economic royalists," as he dubbed his opponents, and establishing a new alignment of forces in the ruling circles.

It was in this context that over 750 delegates met in New York for the Ninth Party Convention. I arrived with the large Chicago delegation in which Southsiders were well represented. In preconvention discussions we had made a self-critical evaluation of our work. We pointed to our strength in united front activities and our success in organizing in the lighter industries. But our most serious weakness lay in the work in basic industry—steel and meat packing—where we had few contacts and had made little progress. But we looked forward to overcoming this in the coming period with the opportunities opened up by the CIO drive for industrial unions.

William Z. Foster, Party chairman and head of the trade union department, made a brief speech, outlining the objectives of the convention and the aims of the Party in the struggle against reaction: strengthen the mass movements, fight against fascism and war, develop our trade union work and the drive for industrial unions, build our unemployed work and work among Blacks, youth and women. He linked all these areas together with the election campaign. It was Foster's first appearance since his heart attack which had occurred during the 1932 campaign. We were happy to see him back, anticipating his advice and participation in the coming steel drive. We gave him a stirring ovation.

Browder, the general secretary, gave the keynote speech, a report of the Central Committee. By correctly building the united front against fascism, he noted, the Party had been greatly strengthened. He stressed that the Party's dramatic growth—membership was up sixty percent in two years to 40,000, with an additional 11,000 YCLers—was an indication of the growing influence and correctness of our policy. Browder pointed to the progress made by the National Negro Congress and stressed that communists had earned an unchallenged place in the Black movement through their efforts around Scottsboro and the Angelo Herndon defense.

He noted that Blacks expected from communists the greatest sensitivity, the greatest energy in their defense, and the closest solidarity. The Communist Party, Browder emphasized, was proud to be spoken of as "the Party of the Negroes." He concluded that the Party must use the 1936 election campaign as a means of further building the American people's united front against fascism.

Browder was the Party's candidate for president; Ford again ran for vice-president. The Party's platform gave implied support for Roosevelt, however, by focusing on Landon as the main danger. The platform correctly emphasized a minimum program which linked demands for more jobs, for social security, relief and for Black rights, with the key political struggle of the period—the defeat of the fascist offensive. To carry this out, we had to build a people's front in the form of a farmer-labor party.

While the convention under Browder's leadership showed the Party's basic strength, it also revealed certain rightist tendencies. Browder advanced the formulation of communism as "Twentieth Century Americanism," a perspective which saw socialist transformation simply as a continuation of American democratic traditions. It was a classless proposition, which failed to make distinctions between bourgeois democracy and proletarian democracy, and obscured the need for revolution. With hindsight, Browder's statements were actually a forewarning of what was later to become an entire theory, the justification for dissolving the Party as a Marxist-Leninist vanguard. In practice it hinted at the submerging of the Party in the united front, abdicating its independent role and tailing after Roosevelt and the New Deal labor leaders.[10]

At the time I doubt that any of us understood the full implications of Browder's formulations. Still, there was some struggle with Browder. He was defeated in the Politburo when he proposed the Party run its candidates as a farmer-labor ticket rather than as communists.

I was concerned about a tendency to downgrade the importance of the right of self-determination. Browder failed to place it as the basic principle upon which we based our fight against Black oppression and for Black-white unity. Further, it was completely absent from the election platform. The minimum demands were placed, but to the exclusion of the maximum program.

I felt this was wrong, particularly because the large increase in Party membership had brought in many new cadres who were not fully aware of the theoretical foundations for our position on the question. I made a speech at the nominating convention which was described in the *Daily Worker* as follows:

> Harry Haywood, Negro leader in Chicago, after emphasizing that the "denial of land and the denial of freedom is at the root of inequality," pledged the Southside delegation to the carrying forward of the Party banner in Chicago.
>
> "It is because we carry our stand for equality to its logical conclusion that we can lead the Negro masses," he declared. "It is not chance that we are the ones who spread the infamy of Scottsboro to every corner of the world. It is not chance that from our ranks came Angelo Herndon."
>
> The education of Party forces to a real understanding of the Party position on the Negro question was urged by Haywood who said that "it is we who have to demonstrate in theory and practice how the struggle for self-determination is at the very heart of the struggle for unity of Negro and white."
>
> Self-determination must be explained, he stated, to white workers. "Always on the basis of unity...on the basis of their common interests with the Negro people. We must convince them that the possibility of their own freedom depends on unity, and that unity demands equality in the deepest sense—self-determination."[11]

Back in Chicago, I was the Communist Party's candidate for Congress from the First Congressional District on the Southside. My opponents, both Blacks, were incumbent Congressman Mitchell, a Democrat supported by the Kelly machine, and Republican Oscar DePriest. The congressional district included the Southside Black wards. In the campaign, I scored both of my adversaries for being responsible for hundreds of evictions on the Southside and I urged my audiences to vote communist. Following the Party's line of indirect support for Roosevelt, I centered my main attack on Landon and his fellow Republican Oscar DePriest. Mitchell won the election, part of the great pro-Roosevelt landslide which witnessed the first nationwide breakaway of Blacks from the Republican Party. The Chicago Democratic machine, dominated by Mayor Kelly, rode to victory on Roosevelt's coattails. I picked up a scant 899 votes on a straight communist ticket.[12] Though it was the highest vote ever received by the Party in that district, it was still quite small relative to our strength for the Southside. Doubtless this was a result of the Party's policy in the 1936 elections, which, as Foster uncritically remarked, amounted to "objective, but not official support for Roosevelt."[13]

Chapter 18

The Spanish Civil War: A Call to Arms

This landscape
buried after a battle—
keep it hidden, my knees,
more hidden than these refugee lands.
Never let go of it, my eyes,
until you say the names, make the wounds,
keep it, my blood, keep
this taste of shadows
so there can be no forgetting.

Pablo Neruda[1]

Why did I go to Spain?

For me, as a communist, Spain was the next logical step. Franco's rebellion in mid-1936 sparked a civil war which became a focal point of the worldwide struggle to halt fascism and prevent World War II. The generals' rebellion against the Spanish people's front government was backed by Hitler and Mussolini, who poured in troops, tanks, planes and supplies in an attempt to topple the progressive Republican government.

The Spanish Civil War was a part of the worldwide drive for fascism. Spain had become the next item on their agenda, after north China and Ethiopia. The Soviet Union called for collective action to stop the aggression in Spain, but the western capitalist democracies responded with a so-called non-intervention pact which allowed Hitler and Mussolini to flood men and munitions into Spain while the U.S., France and Great Britain refused to sell war supplies to either side.

Betrayed by these appeasement policies, the Spanish Loyalist forces faced seven to one odds in equipment and materials. Fascist atrocities shocked the world as the Nazis used Spain as a testing ground for new weapons.

On April 26, 1937, the small village of Guernica in the Basque province of Vizcaya was bombed by German planes from about four-thirty in the afternoon until eight at night. The population was strafed by machine guns as they fled and 1,654 people were killed, 889 wounded.[2] Communist parties throughout the world rallied to the defense of Republican Spain and organized the International Brigades, made up of communists and other anti-fascist fighters, to answer the fascist aggression.

Our Party in the U.S. took up the call. It came during a time of deep domestic crisis and increasing radicalization of masses of Americans. We were already involved in the fight against domestic fascism and were developing a popular front under the leadership of communists. There was widespread support for Republican Spain. Over 3,000 American volunteers traveled there, making up the majority of the Lincoln and Washington Battalions of the Fifteenth Brigade. More than 1,500 died there.

As another step in the fascist plan of world conquest, Spain made the threat of fascism at home more immediate. Although there were relatively few Blacks—not more than a hundred who volunteered for Spain—there was generally support and sympathy for the Republican cause in the Black community. Already alerted to the dangers of fascism through the defense of the Ethiopia campaign, Blacks played an active role in the movement to support Republican Spain with the National Negro Congress and the Southern Negro Youth Congress adopting strong resolutions against fascist aggression and for collective security.[3]

As a Black man, I was acutely aware of the threat of fascism. Blacks have always faced the most brutal, racist oppression in the United States, but fascism would mean a great heightening of the terror and oppression. I felt it was wrong to say that the conditions of Blacks "could not be worse under fascism." It was through this understanding, that I felt the strongest solidarity with the Spanish people.

I was eager to go to Spain. We had carried on an active recruiting campaign for the brigade. Many of my co-workers in Chicago had volunteered—Oliver Law, Tom Trent, Oscar Hunter and others. Also I felt it would afford me the opportunity to learn many lessons in revolutionary struggle which would be invaluable for our Party and my people. Finally, I felt the presence of Black communists in Spain would help emphasize the solidarity between the Afro-American and Spanish people in the struggle against fascism.

I was reminded of this later on in Madrid when Bob Minor introduced me to La Pasionaria (Dolores Ibarruri), the great woman communist leader who embodied the whole sentiment of the Spanish people's struggle. She was happy to see me and related how impressed she had been when she had watched the parade of the International Brigades through Valencia on the way to the Aragon front. Leading them was a handsome Black youth carrying the American flag. "How remarkable that Black people, so oppressed themselves, see the relation of our struggles and are here to join us," she said. "What happened to that young man?"

"That was Milton Herndon, Angelo's brother," I replied. "He was killed a few days later on the Aragon front."

Despite heroic efforts, the civil war in Spain ended in a tragic defeat for the world's anti-fascist forces. The death of the Spanish Republic emboldened the fascists and led, six months later, to Munich, the invasion of Czechoslovakia, and with that, the inevitable outbreak of the Second World War in which millions died.

While the people's forces were defeated in Spain, their cause was not. The fascists could claim this initial battle, but the courageous example set by the Spanish people and the International Brigades, even in defeat, inspired millions across the world to stand up to the fascist tide. In the end, it was fascism that was crushed and the people's forces that triumphed. Those who fell in Spain were the vanguard of the victory.

Personally, I also suffered a defeat, a setback which would affect my life in the Party for some years to come. My experience in Spain was shortlived, lasting only about six months. It, and its aftermath, which I relate in the following chapter, focus on some of the more negative features of the International Brigades. But they should not be allowed to detract from the overall epic struggle that Spain represented. I have not attempted to detail the political and military history of the brigades in Spain. This has been done in a number of books.[4]

Late in the winter of 1937 I raised the question of going to Spain with Browder, and he tried to dissuade me. I would be the highest ranking member of the U.S. Communist Party in Spain and the sole member of the Politburo. He had been receiving reports about the problems in the brigade and probably questioned my ability to handle the job. I was persistent, however, and Browder brought it up before the Politburo where it was reluctantly agreed upon. Within the next few weeks, the Party took steps to strengthen its leadership in Spain and sent over several top organizers.

We sailed for Spain on the *Ile de France* out of New York. Our large group of volunteers went through the usual charade of pretending not to know each other—just tourists meeting for the first time. The leadership group was composed of Bill Lawrence, Ed Bender of New York and Dave Mates from Chicago—all old Party functionaries whom I knew. The crossing was uneventful, and we docked at Le Havre, taking the boat train to Paris.

At the headquarters of the International Brigades on Rue de Lafayette we were taken in charge by the French Party. We spent a few days in Paris, and I went to visit my friends Otto Huiswood and his wife, Hermie Dymont. Huiswood headed the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers, which had been in Hamburg until Hitler's rise to power. From Paris we went by train to Perpignan near the Spanish frontier, where a local committee took charge.

We were split up and lodged in a number of farmhouses outside the town. I was impressed by the strength of the anti-fascist forces in which the local communists were the moving force. We were treated with great courtesy and hospitality by our hosts. Lawrence, Bender, Mates and myself were put up in the same house to wait for our turn to cross the Pyrenees.

While waiting I had a bad attack of asthma. It was the allergic type which I attributed to some ragweed in the vicinity; I had had such attacks before and I assumed this would go away once we got out of the area.

One night at about midnight we were roused and told to fall out with our baggage. We were to begin our march and cars were waiting to drive us south towards the border. After about an hour's drive, we pulled up near a river and got out. This apparently was an assembly spot. A number of comrades were already there and others were arriving by car.

We formed a column of probably a hundred men—including several guides and a doctor. We marched towards the river where we were told to strip and wade across. As I remember the river wasn't very wide or deep, but once we were in, we found the early spring water was ice-cold and chest-high. We got to the other bank, dried off, put on our clothes, reformed our ranks and began to climb. We were told to keep close, not to straggle, because of the French border guards. There were guides in front and file closers in the rear to keep us together so there'd be no stragglers. They set a very fast gait.

We walked quietly, climbing steadily for a couple of hours. My asthma was bothering me, and I had difficulty breathing and found it hard to keep up with the column. It got worse and I finally fell to the ground, completely out of breath. The column stopped. Two of the young men who were our file closers rushed forward. One stuck a pistol in my side as I lay there, saying, "Get up, you bastard, you volunteered, it's too late to change your mind!"

I knew what was on his mind. He was afraid that stragglers might disclose the secret trails to the French border guards who were carrying out the orders of Premier Blum's non-interventionist French government to close off the borders.

My comrades immediately interceded, asserting that they knew me, that I was an important anti-fascist leader, that I must really be ill and wasn't faking. They called the doctor over and he checked me over with his stethoscope. He said, "Yes, this man can't go any further, to do so might cause irreparable damage to his heart."

What to do? The summit and the frontier were a couple of hours away. One of the guides, an elderly man, pointed to a hut on the mountainside, a short distance from the trail. He said it was vacant and suggested I should stay there, rest up, and come over in the morning.

One of my comrades said someone should stay with me; the old man volunteered. The column reformed and marched away, leaving me with the old man. I felt ashamed and somewhat humiliated at not being able to make it over the mountains. I had been in fairly good health ever since I had left the Army; but, I thought to myself, I was getting old (I was thirty-nine and no mountain climber).

After resting in the road for a few minutes, I told the old man that I felt I could make it to the hut. He looked at me anxiously as if to say, "Can you really go?" He insisted on carrying my pack and helped me to my feet. Leaning on him, I made it to the hut. It was a one-room affair with a cot. I flopped down really fagged. He told me to get some sleep, that he was going down the mountain to get some food and would be back shortly. I gave him an incredulous look—you're going down there where we came from? "Oh, that's nothing. I've climbed mountains all my life."

After he left I fell fast asleep and woke when the sun was bright in my eyes. There was the old man sitting beside me, waiting patiently for me to wake up. He smiled—and produced some cheese and wine which I ravenously attacked. He asked if I was ready to attempt the climb, that it was only a short distance, and we would go slowly, resting whenever I was tired. He carried my pack.

We reached the summit after a series of short hikes and pauses. There we met the guards of the Loyalist Spanish Republic. They greeted us; the old man knew them. They said our comrades had passed through several hours before. They insisted we have breakfast with them. The old man remained. The guards told me to follow the road to the Figueras, an ancient fortress now used as barracks for brigade volunteers.

A truck soon came by, and I hopped a ride into Figueras. I met up with my comrades again, as they had been detained there to wait for transportation. Worried about my health and the possibility of not being allowed to go to the front, I went to see a doctor. After a thorough examination, he assured me that my health was alright and he saw no reason not to go to the front. The four of us in the leadership group were driven to Barcelona where we spent the day.

During our stay in Barcelona we spent some time seeing the sights. Walking down the Ramblas de Catalunia, we suddenly stopped and did a double-take. It was Bert Wolfe! He also stopped, startled at seeing us. He had been a leading member and chief lieutenant of the Lovestone group and had been expelled with Lovestone from the Party in 1929.

What was he doing here in Spain, we wondered. We recognized each other—exchanged startled looks and then turned and went our separate ways. We were sure he was up to no good for he had turned virulently anti-communist. Looking back on it, our suspicions may well have been justified. For only a few weeks later, there was a counter-revolutionary putsch of the POUM, the Trotskyite organization.[5] It was reasonable to assume that Wolfe would have made common cause in their struggle against the communists.

We left Barcelona and eventually arrived in Albacete, a provincial capital, now the headquarters of the International Brigades. There were five International Brigades: the eleventh, chiefly German, called the Thaelmann Brigade; the twelfth, chiefly Italian, known as the Garibaldi Brigade; the thirteenth, mainly East European; the fourteenth, chiefly French; and the fifteenth, composed of Americans, French, Belgians and Balkans. The fifteenth, due to the later predominance of Americans, was often incorrectly called the "Abraham Lincoln Brigade."

At this time, all the brigades were under the political command of a triumvirate based in Albacete: André Marty, leader of the famous French Black Sea Mutiny and member of the Political Bureau of the French CP, was commander; Luigi "El Gallo" Longo, second in command of the Italian Party, was inspector general (he was later to become Togliatti's successor as Party chief); and Giuseppi di Vittorio was chief political commissar. The General Commissariat, under their leadership, was the multilingual command apparatus in which all nationalities were represented. Lawrence assumed the position as American political commissar of the Albacete base, Bender became his assistant in charge of cadre, and Dave Mates left Albacete for Tarazona de la Mancha to become political commissar of the Washington Battalion which was then in training.

Even before we left the States, we had heard of the terrible losses suffered by the Americans of the Lincoln Battalion of the Fifteenth Brigade at Jarama. Upon our arrival in Albacete, George Brodsky, the acting American representative, filled us in on the details. The situation was much worse than we had expected. The action of February 27 on the Jarama front resulted in a needless slaughter of American volunteers and their fellow battalion members, the Irish, Canadians and Cubans. Ill-equipped, largely untrained, and without the promised artillery, air or tank support, they were thrown against an impregnable fascist strongpoint, Pingarron Heights, in their first engagement.

This attack was carried through on the insistence of General Gal and Lt. Colonel Vladimir Copic, and over the protest of Captain Merriman, the American battalion commander. Charging up the hill, the Lincolns were caught in a murderous machine gun crossfire. It was a virtual massacre.

The results were that our batallion which had entered the lines with 450 men, had 200 killed or wounded, leaving only 250 effectives on the line. The casualties included most of the officers. Douglas Seacord, second in command, William Henry, commander of the first company, and adjutant Eamon McGrotty were all killed in the attack. Captain Merriman was wounded, as was my old friend and schoolmate, the Englishman Springhall. Springy was an assistant to brigade commissar and along with Merriman had led the assault. My good friend from Hyde Park, our YCL organizer Tom Trent, was also killed that day.

The responsibility for this crime lay with General Gal, division commander, and Copic, the brigade commander. Their incompetence was exposed further when it was later learned that a little further down the line there were ill-defended enemy positions where a breakthrough could have been made.

Despite the handicaps and bungling by the brigade and division commands, the Lincolns fought with great heroism and determination. The International Brigades played an important role in halting the fascist offensive aimed at cutting the Madrid to Valencia road, the life artery of Republican Spain, and thwarted their efforts to encircle the capital.

After a few days in Albacete, I left for the front, accompanied by Lawrence and Bender. Our front lines were situated along the crest of a hill which rose in a gentle slope from the Morato road, about a kilometer away. About halfway up sat a small Spanish villa which was used as brigade headquarters. Entering the villa, we met Lt. Colonel Copic.

Much to my surprise, I recognized him as "Sanko," an old Lenin School student from the Slav language group. He had been one year ahead of me and so I had known him only slightly. He seemed genuinely pleased that I was the brigade's new adjutant political commissar and embraced me warmly. I learned that he had been an officer in the Austro-Hungarian Army and had received some Red Army training. He spoke English fluently.

He introduced us to the members of the staff. There was Col. Hans Klaus, chief of staff, a former Imperial German Army officer; George Aitken, brigade political commissar, my direct superior and a Scottish veteran of Paschendale—the World War I holocaust of British and Canadian troops; Major Allan Johnson, on leave from the U.S. Army and the highest ranking Army officer in Spain (he had come to the brigade after the February 27th disaster); and Lt. George Wattis, former British officer and now in charge of brigade staff mess.

Copic took me aside to give me his account of February 27. According to him, the attack on Pingarron Heights was necessary and had to be carried out as General Gal had ordered. Of course it was difficult for the American volunteers to understand. After all, they were no soldiers, he said, but only raw recruits without training—pampered by easy living in the States and unprepared for the rigors of battle. He reminded me that it takes time to make a soldier. We all took a drubbing that day, the Americans were nothing special.

I listened, growing angry at his disparaging remarks. Of course all of this was true, but it still didn't explain the suicidal assault on Pingarron. These volunteers were not the "do or die" type. They were political soldiers, ideologically committed and they knew who was responsible. Copic's account amounted to a disparagement of the American effort and a complete denial that the command was in error.

We went up to the trenches to meet the men. I was struck by their youth; many were YCL'ers and I recognized only a few. Among those I knew was Oliver Law, a former Chicago comrade, head of the Southside ILD and one of the several American volunteers with military training. Law was a veteran of the Twenty-fourth Infantry, a Black regiment, and was now commander of the Lincoln machine gun company. He had been an important member of our Southside leadership. I remember him running the police gauntlet at the Forty-eighth Street precinct during the Ethiopia demonstration. He had been a victim of Red Squad sadism during the unemployed struggles in the early thirties when he was beaten up and deliberately kicked in the groin. It seemed right and logical that Oliver should be in the front lines in Spain.

I was happy to see that he had survived the February 27 ordeal, but saddened when he told me that the young Irishman, Tom Trent, was among those who had perished in battle that day.

I also met Martin Hourihan, battalion commander, a former Regular Army calvary man, teacher, seaman and trade union leader. The fellows were happy to meet us and glad the U.S. Party now had some leading members in Spain.

In hopes that we could be of some help, they poured forth their complaints. They were beefs concerning poor equipment, food and clothing. They suspected some of these problems arose with the Spanish Premier Largo Caballero. Rumor had it that the international brigades were being discriminated against in terms of the limited amount of equipment available because Caballero, a right wing socialist, hated the communists. But the men's bitterest complaints were directed at the brutal incompetence and irresponsibility of Copic and Gal. The men had absolutely no faith in their leadership and were particularly angered by the fact that they had had no relief in four months. They wanted adequate American representation on the brigade staff.

I then spoke with Allan Johnson. He was very impressive and struck me as a first-rate officer, a graduate of the U.S. War College who had been a Regular Army captain assigned to the Massachusetts National Guard. Though he arrived at the front after the Jarama battle, he felt the men's complaints were justified. He was particularly outraged at what he considered to be the incompetence of the brigade and division leaders. He felt that they had failed to exercise common sense. His opinion was that something had to be done, at least the removal of Copic, because the colonel had lost the confidence of the men of the Lincoln Battalion.

Lawrence, Bender and I talked it over and agreed that something had to be done. The two of them returned to Albacete and made an appointment with Marty's adjutant, Vidal. He was sympathetic and advised us to return in two weeks. We returned, and he explained that it was impossible to remove Copic. Vidal assured us that the men would be given relief—new weapons, clothing and equipment. Also the brigades would be reorganized and divided into two regiments with Chapayev to lead the Slavic group. He then asked who we thought should lead the English speaking battalions. I answered him immediately. Jock Cunningham was my choice, a well-respected rank-and-file leader. (Johnson probably would have been our first choice, but he had left Spain on a special mission to procure weapons for the Loyalist government and was not to return until September.) Vidal agreed and asked if I would be Cunningham's political commissar. I accepted. Vidal also explained at this point that we would be drawn back from the front for a long-deserved rest—though not right away—and the plan would be implemented at that time.

These changes would be an important victory for our men but I unfortunately paid far too little attention to the possible repercussions. I had made an enemy of Copic.

Our battalion was pulled back for a two-day rest at Alcala de Benares. We were to take part in the May Day celebrations. At this time, Steve Nelson came up to the brigade. I only knew him slightly but he had a reputation as a veteran communist organizer and a leader in the eastern Pennsylvania anthracite coal mining areas. When I met him, he relieved Fred Lutz as commissar of the Lincoln Battalion.

Shortly thereafter, on May 5, Bob Minor came over as a representative of the Politburo for a short inspection tour. We filled him in on the events with Copic. He spoke to the men on the May 3rd attempted coup of the POUM, criticizing Caballero very sharply for his attitude toward the brigades, and left a new Dodge for my use.

In the middle of May, I accompanied Al Tanz, brigade supply officer, to Valencia on a matter of supplies and we learned more about the coup. At that time, the popular front government was in a crisis as a result of the POUM action. Caballero had been hesitant to take military measures against the counter-revolutionary coup. His stand lost him the government, and he resigned on May 16.

A few days later, we heard La Pasionaria speak at one of the big halls in Valencia.[6] She stated the position of the communists. I went to hear her with Langston Hughes and Nicolas Guillén, the black Cuban poet. I had heard great oratory before, but never anything like hers. She appeared to me tall and stately. She spoke in a calm manner with few oratorical flourishes, hardly raising her voice.

It was a damning bill of particulars, detailing the crimes of the Trotskyist POUM. She described how under their leadership the anarchist “uncontrollables” had set up a dictatorship of libertarian communes in Aragon where they were strong. Now instead of agrarian reform for the benefit of the peasantry, they had imposed forced collectivization—this in the midst of a bourgeois democratic revolution. “You could win the war, but lose the revolution,” was their slogan. She went on and detailed how they had refused to build the people's army and kept the arms in the rear, preparing for an uprising against the popular front government.

She charged fascist infiltration and collusion with Franco's agents. Finally, their activities culminated in the May 3 coup which left the Aragon front wide open to the fascists. Although I knew very little Spanish, I felt I could understand every word. Of course, I was acquainted with the subject and that helped. La Pasionaria spoke eloquently, holding the audience in rapt attention for forty-five minutes. She built it up slowly and carefully, point by point, to the end of her speech. Lowering her voice she asked, "What are you going to do with such people?"

Pandemonium then broke out in the hall. "Kill 'em! Shoot 'em!" I had never seen such a demonstration.

The meeting broke down spontaneously into a whole number of small meetings throughout the hall; people were bringing it down to their local situations, taking the lessons from her speech. She stood poised and calm, waiting for the commotion (which lasted fifteen minutes) to subside. And then a unanimous resolution of support for her and the Central Committee of the Spanish Communist Party was passed.

I returned to the front and pursued my duties as deputy brigade commissar. A political commissar's main job was to inspire morale and the highest spirit of discipline and loyalty among the men for the Republican cause. A crucial task was to establish a mutual confidence and close comradeship between officers and men. It was not a militaristic discipline, but rather one based on the conscious realization that the interest of the people and the army were one.

Our duties required keeping the men fully informed as to the progress of the war and our current military objectives. Our work extended to the smallest detail that contributed to the physical and mental well-being of the men—food, clothing, supplies, mail, rest and leisure. Our jobs were an integral part of the brigade command structure. Political officers held parallel rank with the military command and all orders to the troops needed the signature of both. The responsibilities and difficulties of the job were tremendous, and we could not always live up to them.

Our Fifteenth Brigade Commissariat was under the direction of Aitken. We published a daily memo sheet, *Our Fight,* in English and Spanish. There was also a larger periodical, *The Volunteer for Liberty,* which was published in French, German, Italian, Polish and English. We used sound trucks for propaganda directed at the fascist troops calling on them to join the fight against their real enemies.

The heroic Frank Ryan, a flamboyant Irish journalist and former officer in the IRA, was assigned to work with us. On one occasion, we drove into Madrid together to check up on the printing of *The Volunteer.* As we were driving from Grand Via, a main street in Madrid, I realized it was almost deserted. I wondered what was happening. Frank noticed also and exclaimed, "Damn! I didn't realize it was so late! It must be four o'clock!"

Suddenly a shell whistled over our heads and exploded down the street. It was the regular daily shelling that the fascists used to demoralize the valiant citizens of Madrid. The shelling came faithfully every day at four o'clock—you could set your watch by it. It came from Mt. Garabitis on Casa de Campo and was soon to be the objective of one of our offensives.

The men were finally withdrawn for relief to small villages near Madrid. The reorganization plan was put into effect and the men were given new equipment and clothing. After a few weeks' rest, our brigade was given orders to move to the new front. Our first objective was Villanueva de la Cañada, a well fortified town on the Brunete Road. On the road to Villanueva, we passed many of the Listers and Campesinos, crack troops of the Loyalist army, lined up by the side of the road ready to move out. We realized this was to be a major battle.

We met with stiff resistance and became pinned down. The British Battalion in the Fifteenth Brigade circled to the west to cut the road leading south to Brunete. They crossed just to the right of us under machine gun cover directed by Walter Garland, the young Black commander of a machine gun company. Garland had been seriously wounded at Jarama and, after recovering, was sent to the brigade training camp at Tarazona de la Mancha where he assisted in the training of the Washington Battalion. He served as acting commander until he left for the Brunete front, at which time he was relieved by Merriman.

I had made my way to the rear behind the lines to look over our positions. As I approached Garland's machine gun company, he shouted a warning, "Get down, Harry, the snipers have a bead on that spot! Captain Trail's just been hit right there!" I ducked quickly, getting out of the line of fire, but a young Spanish soldier was not so lucky. Coming up behind me, he was hit and killed.

Walter was impressive, directing the very effective cover fire which allowed the British to cross the road. Standing behind his men, much like a quarterback barking signals, he would order his gunners into action, the fire pinning down the fascists long enough for the British to make it across.

Our Washington Battalion was under orders to move straight ahead for a frontal attack on the town. The town was well fortified and we faced heavy machine gun fire. Our only orders were to keep advancing. This we did, but very slowly. At one point, Martin Hourihan (adjutant to Cunningham) and I witnessed a suicidal charge by our cavalry in which they suffered terrible losses and were forced into a wild, disorganized retreat, nearly overrunning our position. Shaking his head in disbelief, Hourihan, an old cavalry man himself, asked, "Did you ever see anything like that? Horse cavalry attacking such a fortified position?"

Hourihan was severely wounded later that day in the final assault on Villanueva. Our attack proceeded very slowly and it wasn't until early evening, after being pinned down the entire day in the sweltering heat with little water, that we forced the fascists to withdraw and were able to seize the town. But this delay was to have serious consequences for it gave the fascists time to figure out our objective, to begin concentration of their troops and materiel on the Mosquito Heights, the highest point in the area. Our offensive had lost its element of surprise.

In town I found Cunningham's headquarters; he had moved in with the British Battalion which was on our right flank. Immediately he informed me that we were moving out. Moving south down the Brunete road, we soon encountered the horrible sight of the bodies of women and children lying in the road, as well as the bodies of members of the British Battalion. Among those latter I recognized Brown, a member of the British Central Committee and formerly of the Lenin School. He had been a political commissar of one of the British companies.

What had happened? A group of fascists, fleeing the town, had seized some women and children as hostages, forcing them to march in front as a shield against the British fire. Passing the British they suddenly opened fire and threw grenades. Shoving the hostages aside they rushed down the road. The British, caught off-guard by this ruse, tried to defend themselves. But to avoid shooting the women and children, they were unable to effectively reply and took many casualties as a number of fascists escaped.

We continued to march in the direction of Brunete to our new attack position, avoiding the road as much as possible. Hitler's and Mussolini's planes were already bombing the roads. Towards evening we halted for the night. Cunningham was called to brigade headquarters to get the plan of action for the next day. At the time I thought it was strange that I had not been called. Jock returned shortly and unfolded a military map, asking me if I could read it. Having no experience in military map reading, I said no. He abruptly folded the map and marched off without saying another word, apparently having confirmed some derogatory judgement of me.

I mention this incident because from that time on, there seemed to be a definite cooling in our relationship. At the time, I wondered if there were any connection between this action and an incident with Nathan earlier that morning. I had been standing roadside waiting for the Washington Battalion to pass so I could fall in with them. Nathan, the chief operations officer for the brigades, marched past. Out of the side of his mouth he snarled, "You'll get yours."

This came so suddenly and so threateningly, that I was taken aback. I yelled after him, "What did you say?" But he kept going without looking back. Now, putting these incidents together, I began for the first time to suspect that the hand of Col. Copic was at work, that he had begun lining brigade staff up against me in order to even the score.

The next morning we were to be in position. I had only a general idea of the action. I knew our immediate objective was Mosquito Crest, the dominant ridge in the area, in the foothills of the Guadarrama Mountains, overlooking Madrid. If we took the hill, the fascists' positions at Mt. Garabitas, from which they shelled the city daily, would be outflanked and untenable. Franco would be forced to abandon his salient, and the seige of Madrid would be lifted.

We arose early and were in our attack positions by daylight. In our brigade sector, the British Battalion was on the right, where I was, the Franco-Belgian, Spanish, Washington-Lincoln and Dimitrov Battalions were all on our left. At zero hour, our men charged up the hill with shouts, hurrahs and vivas, dashing across the Guadarrama River, which at this time of year was practically dry. Under cover of machine guns, we took the first ridge. By this time, however, the surprise element in the offensive was lost.

The enemy had decamped, moving back to the heights beyond. We stood looking east; ahead of us, beyond a series of ridges and probably 3,000 meters away, loomed Mosquito Crest, our objective. We established temporary regimental headquarters on the first ridge in a large dugout, vacated by the fascists. We established telephone connections with the brigade. Our orders were to continue the attack.

After a slight rest, all battalions moved forward in an attack; British on the right, then Washington and Lincoln. Our regimental headquarters were closest to the British positions and I watched the British battalion led by its commander Fred Copeman, leader of the naval mutiny of the *Enver Gordon,* move forward. Jock and I remained in our newly established headquarters, as all the battalions moved forward. The brigades came under withering fire from the crest and were forced to withdraw with heavy casualties. It was during this attack that Oliver Law was killed. The men brought back the wounded during a lull following the withdrawal.

During the next few days, a number of attacks and probes were made in the direction of the crest. Now seeing what we were up to, the fascists began a massive concentration of troops and weaponry, artillery and planes. The air superiority which we enjoyed the first day or two was soon gone. The fascists brought in planes from everywhere. There were swarms of German Heinkels and Italian Cazas that bombed and strafed our ground positions, flying so low they showered us with hand grenades from the sky. All this amidst the most murderous heat that I had ever experienced. The sun was a blazing inferno. The Guadarrama River, which the day before had been a trickle, was now completely dry.

By now the food and water problem was acute. The iron rations (reserve supplies) were running out, and we had lost our rolling kitchens; they had failed to keep up with our advance and were scattered along the road, almost to Madrid—sixteen miles away. A main duty of a commissar was to maintain morale; proper and sufficient food was an important item in this task. With the incessant bombing and strafing, the whole network of roads between Madrid and the front was disrupted and supplies were prevented from moving up. I suggested to Jock that I round up the chuckwagons and he agreed. I then left the headquarters dugout, walked down the hill across to the west bank of the river, and found the car Minor had left me at the brigade car pool in the woods. A young lad assigned to me as driver was there and we drove back in search of the kitchens.

On the road I saw the devastation caused by the bombing. Villages which were standing when we had passed through on our offensive were now reduced to rubble, deserted by their surviving inhabitants. The sickeningly sweet stench of death filled the air. The bombing of the roads was so sustained that several times we stopped, abandoned our car, and took refuge in the woods.

We finally located some of the kitchens. They had pulled off the road to escape the planes. I remember running across an American mess officer from the Washington Battalion, Sam Kaye, who had drawn his whole outfit off the road into the nearby woods. He remained near the road, peering out from a culvert and trying to find directions to our brigade sector. There were several more of the rolling kitchens scattered along the way. I told him to wait until dark and some let-up in the heavy enemy bombing and we would then guide them up to our positions. This is what we did, and we arrived late that night.

I spent the remainder of the night with the kitchen crew. In the morning I crossed the river with a Canadian comrade. We started up the hill to the regimental headquarters. Halfway up, we were halted by an ear splitting and earth shaking barrage of enemy artillery. We fled from the road and burrowed ourselves into the earth. We were showered with stones and dust, but miraculously escaped without being harmed.

What had happened? The British, attacking east along Bodilla Road, ran into the withering fire of fascist artillery massed along the crest, and were hurled back with heavy losses. The barrage lasted probably an hour. When the artillery finally stopped, we got up and continued up the hill to regimental headquarters. We found the entrance to the dugout blocked by a number of dead bodies. Among them I recognized Black, Canadian commander of our new anti-tank group. Charles Goodfellow, adjutant commander of the British battalion lay dead in the road, cut down while trying to reach the safety of the dugout. We entered to find it crowded with men from the British battalion; those fortunate enough to escape the murderous shelling on the road. They had also dragged in a number of wounded comrades. In the dim light I saw Ted Allen, a Canadian newspaperman who was covering the Brunete offensive for the *Canadian Tribune,* the communist paper.

Jock Cunningham was shouting excitedly over the brigade field phone. He hung up, turned and continued shouting, this time at me. "Where the hell have you been?"

"Rounding up the kitchens, you knew that," I said.

"Fuck the kitchens, you should have been here!"

I was incensed by his comment and even more by his tone. He was like a British sergeant dressing down a recruit. "You know goddamn well you agreed I should go get the kitchens!" I yelled back.

We confronted each other a few feet apart. Then Jock unleashed his crowning insult. "Aw, fuck off. You're no good anyway. You're scared now."

Furious, I started towards him. Ted Allen, sitting close by, jumped up and rushed between us. "Take it easy, Harry," he urged.

"This can't be settled now in the midst of battle. You'd better go back to the brigade and settle this later."

I turned and walked out of the dugout, the confrontation over. I made my way down the road towards the river. The main shelling had stopped, but there was desultory fire. Walking down the hill, I thought over the events that had led up to this confrontation with Jock. Again I sensed the fine hand of Col. Copic behind the whole matter. There had been the incident with Major George Nathan. Our relationship had been cordial but how was I to account for his actions on the road up to Villanueva? Then there was the fact that I hadn't been called into the operations meeting and the map incident with Jock that followed. Something wasn't right.

As I neared the river, engrossed in thought, I ran into Copic. He could see from my expression that I was troubled.

"What's the matter?" he asked eagerly.

I told him about the argument with Jock. "I told you those guys were no good, but you sided with them against me," he beamed. "What are you going to do now?" I told him I was on my way back to see Steve Nelson.

I found Steve at the Lincoln Battalion headquarters. He had had his own troubles; the Lincolns had also suffered heavy casualties. Oliver Law had been killed. Law's adjutant, Vincent Usera, an ex-Marine officer, had left his post without permission and had been dismissed from the battalion staff by Steve and the other officers.[7] Nelson now assumed command of the battalion. I informed him about my quarrel with Jock. His opinion was that it couldn't be settled then in the midst of battle. He suggested that I return to Albacete, pick up Lawrence and Bender, and bring them up to the front within the next few days. Then we could find time with leading American comrades at the front to have a meeting on the situation and decide what to do. This made sense.

The meeting took place a few days later, when the battalion was given rest and drawn back on the other side of the river. Present were Steve Nelson; Mirko Mirkovicz, commander of the Washington Battalion; Dave Mates; two or three other comrades from the front; Bill Lawrence and George Bender from Albacete; and myself.

In the meeting, Steve repeated what he had said earlier. The issue couldn't be settled at that time, in the midst of battle. Jock Cunningham, he pointed out, was in effective command of the regiment. Thus he felt that I should be withdrawn from the front and things worked out later. This was unanimously agreed upon.

On my own part, I felt it was the only possible decision that could be made under the circumstances, but nevertheless, I didn't like it. I left the front bitter and frustrated. But now I had time to understand how this situation had come about. I had led the fight for improvement of conditions for the Americans and the removal of Copic. The main responsibility for the February 27 slaughter at Jarama was Gal's, the division commander. Copic, however, shared in it as brigade commander and became the main apologist for Gal—consequently he was the immediate target for the men's anger. The struggle for changes in the brigade brought about improved conditions, reorganization and a marked boost in morale. It also meant a loss of prestige for Copic, even though he remained as commander.

Copic was aware of my role in all of this. At the front, where his power and influence were greatest, he was at last able to move against me.

Johnson had been the only American on the brigade staff. When he left the front on a special mission, Nathan took his place. Copic easily brought Nathan into his inner circle which, I reasoned, enabled him to clear the way to isolate me in the brigade leadership. My confrontation with Jock was undoubtedly the end result of this effort to regain his lost prestige.

Shortly after the meeting at the front, Bob Minor arrived back in Spain, this time as official representative of the CPUSA. I was happy to see him. He listened sympathetically to my side of the story and told me that they heard I was having difficulties. Browder had said that if I couldn't see my way through, I should come back home.

He agreed that my withdrawal was the only thing that could have been done at the time, and that at some future time it might be possible to work me into some position at the front. In the meantime, he suggested that I might consider taking over as political commissar in Madrid. I rejected this latter proposal, considering it a demotion. By this time, I was already beginning to feel that I was getting the short end of the deal. Rather than go to Madrid, I stayed in Albacete with Lawrence and Bender, accompanying them on their rounds of hospitals, checking up on Americans. Bob Minor took me to Valencia and introduced me to leaders from other countries and from Spain.

The battle of Brunete ended on July 28. Of the 360 men in the British battalion, only thirty-seven were left on the line. The remainder were either killed or wounded. The Franco-Belgian battalion had eighty-eight left. The Dimitrovs had ninety-three left from 450. Only 125 Spaniards remained effective out of 400. There had been two American battalions with a total of 900 men. Now there were 280 effectives who were merged into one battalion. They pulled back to rest in villages near Madrid, the same villages from which they had left for the offensive. Officers killed included Nathan. A number of volunteers were given "extended leaves" to return home if they wanted. Among those repatriated were Jock Cunningham and Aitken.

There was now, for the first time, an American ascendency in the brigade. Although Copic remained commander, Steve Nelson replaced Aitken as political commissar; Merriman, now a major, became chief of staff, replacing the German Col. Klaus. Gal was dismissed. Johnson returned to command the training camp at Tarazona. The brigade went on to Terruel and then to the Aragon front. It became clear to me that after all this reorganization, all of which passed me over, there was no place for me in the brigade. Minor raised again the question of repatriation and I agreed.

The fighting in Spain continued for nearly eighteen months after I left. the internationals fought many more battles and their heroism and fighting spirit became legendary.

But Loyalist Spain was not able to overcome the military superiority of the fascists, a condition forced on it by the nonintervention pact. On March 28, 1939, Madrid fell, ending the three years of bitter fighting. Republican Spain was clearly a victim of the western imperialists' policy of appeasement. The fascist victory in Spain was another step toward World War II.

I left Spain bitter and frustrated. I was disappointed that I had not fully anticipated nor was I able to overcome the difficulties encountered there. It was for me a personal crisis, but nothing compared to what I was faced with on returning home.

Chapter 19

World War II and the Merchant Marines

I returned home from Spain in the fall of 1937. Soon after arriving, I heard for the first time the malicious rumors which had preceded me. I was being accused of leaving the front without permission, of running away.

Browder's first words to me were, "Harry, had you been a better organizer you wouldn't have gotten into that fix."

I had to admit that there was some truth in this. I'd done pretty well in Chicago, but there I had the benefit of collective leadership. In Spain, a more experienced organizer would have moved cautiously, not impulsively as I had. He would have made a more careful analysis of the situation, arrived at an estimate of exactly what could be done and not allowed himself to be pushed into premature action. As a staff officer, I lived in brigade headquarters, separately from the men in the trenches. A more experienced organizer would have made a greater effort to get out among the men and spend less time at headquarters.

I had made some mistakes in Spain. But I did not feel anything I had done warranted the type of rumor and slander that I was now confronted with. I had led the struggle to improve conditions in the brigade after Jarama. I had made tactical errors in carrying out this struggle, but I expected and felt I deserved the support of our leading comrades. Now I found myself the victim of a rumor campaign that could only have started in Spain.

I felt that at least the brigade leadership, which now included

Steve Nelson and Lawrence, could have explained to the men why and how it was decided that I should leave the front. But they never did. Instead, it was left that "Harry Haywood left the front," providing fertile soil for rumor mongering.

I was in no position to fight the rumors, however. First, I hesitated to bring the whole business out into the open in the midst of the war. Also, to defend myself would necessitate bringing back to the forefront people and events which had drifted into history as the bitter fighting in Spain continued. Gal had been dismissed from the Republican Army for mistakes, including the criminal blunders at Jarama; Nathan was killed; Cunningham and Aitken repatriated; Klaus had been transferred to the Thaelmann Brigade; and only Copic remained of the old leadership.[1] The men who survived Jarama were veterans now. And most significantly, the gross command errors at Jarama's Pingarron Heights were not repeated, thus pushing these events into the background where they lost the sharp significance they had while I was in Spain.

I was demoralized and depressed. I had no other course but to accept the decision to leave the matter in abeyance until a later date. The rumors, however, persisted—undermining my role as a leading Party member and questioning my integrity. At the time I saw this slander campaign as an unwarranted attack and, personally, as a tremendous setback. Only years later was I able to see how this attack on a leading Black cadre was part of the overall thrust in the leadership of the Party to liquidate the national question and our leading role in the struggle. That is, the Browderite leadership made good use of the political in-fighting in Spain.

The sharpest attacks came from James Ford. He lost no time in moving to take advantage of my loss of prestige as a result of Spain. In my absence, Ford had continued to build his one-man leadership of Afro-American work. Under his influence, the Harlem leaders tended to become a closed group; anyone who did not provide Ford with uncritical support was suspected of being "anti-leadership." As head of the National Negro Commission, Ford tried to extend his style of leadership to the national scene.

In this, he had the active support of Browder who played upon

Ford's personal ambitions with uncritical praise, referring to him as "the Frederick Douglass of our time." As a result, he became one of Browder's key henchmen. Ford also continued a vendetta against the older comrades, which eventually led to the expulsion of Briggs and Moore.[2] Before Spain, I had sufficient prestige as a leader and theoretician in my own right to resist this tendency. But now with my standing largely eroded by the difficulties in Spain, Ford moved to consolidate his position and oust me from leadership once and for all.

Although I had my differences with Ford, I did not expect the type of veiled attack which he launched. This attack was revealed through a series of underhanded blows. The first was an article I had written as part of the Party's pre-convention discussion in early 1938. The article, "The White South and the People's Front," was submitted to *The Communist,* the Party's theoretical organ. It was a polemic against Francis Franklin, a young Southern intellectual who was at the time the head of the Education Department of the YCL.

He had published an article in the January 1938 issue of *The Communist*, "For a Free, Happy and Prosperous South,"[3] which minimized the role of revolutionary Reconstruction and made unwarranted concessions to reactionary distortions of the period, particularly concerning the role of the "carpetbaggers." Under the guise of winning the white Southern masses to our program, he distorted the revolutionary thrust of Reconstruction. His article was, in effect, an attack on some of the basic tenets of our revolutionary position. I answered in my article (published in April 1938) by reasserting our position on the revolutionary role of Reconstruction and the so-called carpetbag rule as the most democratic period that the South had ever known.[4]

To my surprise, I picked up the April issue of *The Communist* and saw that my article had been printed just as I wrote it, but under the name of Theodore Bassett. Bassett was one of James Ford's inner circle and educational director in Harlem. I approached V.J. Jerome (*The Communist* editor) to find out what had happened. Jerome stated that Ford had insisted that my name be removed from the article for "political reasons." Obviously

Ford pirated this article to prevent me from regaining any prominence and in order to enhance the prestige of his Harlem leadership. He was able to do this by invoking my "Spanish difficulties" as a reason for not allowing my name to appear in print.

The Tenth Convention of the CPUSA was held in New York in May 1938. There I was removed from the Politburo and the Central Committee. My name was simply omitted from the slate of candidates submitted to the convention by the presiding committee. Browder was the person who informed me of the move, citing the reason of "mistakes made in Spain."

After twelve years of being on the Party payroll, I was suddenly faced with the need to find employment outside. For a well-known communist, it was not easy.

In the summer of 1939, the World's Fair opened in New York City. Isadore Schneider, a left-wing writer and poet, headed up the publicity for the Soviet pavillion. He took me on as his assistant. My job was to popularize the pavillion among Blacks and to publicize Soviet achievement in solving national and racial questions. It was an interesting job. I put advertisements in the Black press and organized delegations of prominent Black leaders to visit the exhibit. We held a press conference of Black editors and invited them to dinner at the pavillion. My still fluent knowledge of Russian proved very useful and I translated for the Soviet guides when groups visited.

It wasn't long before Ford got wind of my activities, however. He told me angrily, "You know you shouldn't have taken this job...you're too well known a communist." According to him, public relations should be handled by a non-Party person—otherwise the effort to publicize the exhibit would be narrowed. I certainly didn't agree with what he had said and told him so. But he insisted that I resign or he would take steps to have me removed. I went to see Schneider and learned that Ford had already talked to him. I had been red-baited before, but always by the police or bourgeois press. Ford had added a new twist! I collected my wages and left.

Ford's vendetta continued through the summer of 1939. As the outbreak of world war approached, Japanese imperialists were stepping up a propaganda campaign directed at Blacks in the U.S. Claiming to be the champions of the colored races, they attempted to use the national liberation movement of Blacks for their own purposes against their U.S. imperialist rivals, and to disrupt the popular anti-fascist forces.

Cyril Briggs and I wrote a pamphlet to counter this pro-Japanese movement among Blacks.[5] This pamphlet refuted their spurious propaganda and exposed the Japanese plunder of north China and their imperialist designs for Southeast Asia. The Negro Commission allowed the pamphlet to be published, but only after Ford had added his name and those of his close associates, Theodore Bassett and Abner Berry.

In the early fall, Jack Stachel, national organizational secretary, called me into his office and asked if I wanted to go to Baltimore to head up Afro-American work for the Maryland district, which included Washington, D.C.

I welcomed the opportunity to return to work as a Party organizer and saw it as an indication that the personal attacks were coming to an end. Maryland provided a challenging place to work. There was the giant Bethlehem Steel plant, Sparrows Point, which had a significant number of Black workers. The drive to organize little steel had suffered a defeat at the 1937 Memorial Day Massacre in south Chicago. Now the drive was regaining momentum. As one of the largest eastern seaports, the Baltimore waterfront was a hotbed of activity, lead by the doughty, dynamic and energetic Pat Whelan.

There were also important Black liberation struggles in the district. Baltimore was the scene of anti-police repression campaigns, and the Eastern Shore—a former slave breeding center and actually part of the Black Belt—was the sight of periodic lynchings and frame-ups.

I stayed about a year before the shadow of Spain crept up on me. One of my most important tasks was organizing for the Third National Convention of the National Negro Congress. The organizing in preparation for the convention and the meeting itself provided important impetus for all the work in the district.

John P. Davis, executive secretary of the NNC, asked to borrow some funds for the convention, promising to repay us as soon as it was over. I supported this request and we lent the NNC money from district funds. But Davis was unable to repay us as he had promised. Fields, the district organizer, took exception to this and we clashed sharply. Before the situation could be resolved, Fields went to the national office without my knowledge. He was able to convince them that I was not needed in the district. I was soon withdrawn, returning to New York in the fall of 1939.

World War II, with its beginning in the fascist invasion of Ethiopia, China and Spain, broke out in earnest with Hitler's lightning conquest of Poland in September 1939. The imperialist governments of France, Great Britain and the U.S., which had been following a policy of appeasement towards the building up of the German war machine in the hopes of using it in an armed invasion of the Soviet Union, now found themselves threatened. Their schemes against the Soviets had been shaken by the non-aggression pact signed by the Soviets with Germany in August 1939.

The Soviet policy had consistently urged joint action against fascist aggression, but the capitalist governments were not interested. The Soviets offered to defend Czechoslovakia, but the French refused to put their mutual defense pact into effect. The Soviets offered to defend Poland on the eve of the German invasion, but Poland refused to allow the Red Army units to cross the border. The British stubbornly refused any type of mutual assistance pact with the Soviet Union, hoping all the time for war between Germany and Russia.

The Soviets thus moved to defend themselves and thwart this imperialist scheme, signing the non-aggression pact with Germany—a brilliant and necessary diplomatic move.

Despite the fact that France and Britain were pledged to assist Poland, they did nothing in response to Hitler's invasion. For six months, neither side made a military move against the other. This period, the "phony war," was used by the western imperialists in a final attempt to turn the war against the Soviets.

On November 30, 1939, war broke out between the Soviet

Union and Finland. The immediate cause was German-inspired Finnish incursions into Soviet territory, greatly encouraged and fostered by attempts by the British and French to foment war against the Soviet Union.

But Hitler had his own plan. Realizing the impossibility of waging war on both eastern and western fronts, he moved against the weaker opponents. In April 1940, German troops marched into Denmark and Norway. Finland proved the utter bankruptcy of British and French policy by allying itself with the fascists. On May 28, the supposedly invincible armies of France were defeated and the British were driven into the sea at Dunkirk. In rapid succession, the countries of western Europe came under Nazi control. Thus satisfied that his western front was secure and not considering the British a serious threat to his rear, Hitler turned his attention eastward. Viciously occupying Yugoslavia, Greece and Albania, and bringing Bulgaria into the war as a fascist ally, Hitler overran the Balkans and prepared for his decisive blow of the war—the Soviet Union.

The initial stage of the war (September 1939 to June 1941) was dominated by the imperialist powers and was a war for world domination. Our policy called for active support of China and all oppressed peoples in their struggles against fascism and for national independence. It called for ending the war as rapidly as possible on the basis of a democratic peace. Our main slogan was "Keep America out of the imperialist war!"

The great sentiment for peace was reflected in the positions of both the AFL and the CIO which went on record as opposing U.S. participation in the war. United front organizations such as the NNC, the Southern Congress for Human Welfare and others adopted similar positions.

Probably the largest of the many peace activities was the American Peace Mobilization, formed in Chicago on August 31, 1940. It consisted of over 6,000 delegates representing about 12,000,000 people in trade unions, youth organizations, women's clubs and Black groups. Under the banner of "For a People's Peace," it fought against further extension of the war.

In October 1939, a few weeks after the fascist conquest of

Poland, I found myself in the Veteran's Hospital at Kingsbridge Road in the Bronx. I suffered a serious heart attack. My condition was found to be service connected; the result of the endocarditis I had suffered while in the Army during the First World War. This time the diagnosis was valvular heart disease. I was awarded full compensation, one hundred dollars per month, by the Veterans' Administration.

R &R IN THE SAN FERNANDO VALLEY

After three months' recuperation, I was released from the hospital and advised to take a long rest. Thinking that I might be incapacitated for life, I decided to go to Los Angeles, arriving there in the winter of 1940. I rented a small bungalow on the property of a comrade in the San Fernando Valley and stayed there over a year. It was on Van Nuys Road near the Pacoima Reservoir.

My stay was very restful and I became a member of the Southern California District of the Party. There was a good Party organization in the valley and a relatively large circle of sympathizers. The comrades were very solicitous towards me.

Our Party branch actively organized in the valley for the American Peace Mobilization and we were able to send a strong delegation to Chicago as part of the Los Angeles contingent. Although still recuperating, I helped with this work by giving talks and leading discussions on the international situation and the progress of the war.

It was in California that I met an old comrade, Belle Lewis, who had also come from the east to recuperate from an illness. I was happy to see her again, having known her back east during the National Miners Strike of 1931. She was a veteran communist and organizer for the National Miners Strike Relief Organization in "bloody" Harlan County. During the strike, she had been jailed along with five other women who were framed up and known as the Kentucky Six. Later she was a section organizer in Boston's Black ghetto.

Belle was a handsome, warm-hearted woman in her early thirties. She had Slavic features, with a broad face and high cheek bones. We were both lonely and struck it off quite well together. She came to live with me in the valley and later we were formally married. Our union was to last fifteen years.

On June 22, 1941, Hitler launched his attack against the Soviet Union. This fateful action dramatically changed the character of the war and was in fact, the beginning of the end for Hitler. Hitler's armies marched deep into the Soviet Union, but in the winter of 1941-42 the heroic effort of the Russian people stopped the German offensive at Leningrad and Moscow.

A regrouped German army launched another offensive in the spring of 1942, aimed at Stalingrad. For months the city was under siege, but the powerful Germans could not take the city. The epic Battle of Stalingrad was ended January 31, 1943, with the decisive defeat of Hitler's crack Sixth Army.

With the invasion of the Soviet Union, our Party's policy towards the war changed. It was no longer possible to limit the spread of the war; it was now a people's war aimed at the defeat of fascism. The bombing of Pearl Harbor ended any lingering hope that America could stay out of the war. Our slogans became, "Everything for National Unity!" and "Everything for Victory!"

By the time Hitler hurled his war machine against the Soviet Union, my health had improved and I was feeling as good as ever. Belle and I decided to move into L.A. proper and become more active in Party affairs. Browder had sent a letter to the district secretary, Carl Winter, to the effect that the Spanish incident was not to be held against me and I was to be given an opportunity to make my contributions to the Party. Pettis Perry was at the time head of Afro-American work in the district.

Although I wasn't aware of it at the time, in hindsight it's clear that under Browder's leadership Ford had already set on a course which was to lead to the liquidation of the Party's revolutionary position on the Black national question. The Party had already dissolved the Sharecroppers Union and, under the pretext of building the united front, was slurring over the special demands of Blacks in all its areas of work.

The Party's correct position for consolidating the united front, the declaration of national unity under the slogans, "Everything for the war effort!" and "Everything for victory over worldwide fascist slavery!" was however accompanied by a serious undermining of the Party's leading role and its ideological strength. The tendency to subordinate the class struggle to Roosevelt's New Deal policy had manifested itself earlier in the liquidation of the Party's factory units, shop papers and trade union fractions.

Now this tendency was revealing itself in distortions of the no-strike pledge and hiding the face of the Party. Belle brought this home to me in regards to her work in a war industry plant in Los Angeles. She was very dissatisfied and angry because according to the line she was supposed to remain in the background—promoting non-Party people for union leadership. In many cases, and her plant was a good example, the no-strike pledge was interpreted to mean little, if any, struggle around working conditions or safety. The Party demanded virtually no concessions from the factory owners in return for the guarantee that workers would not strike during the course of the war.

A similar tendency of slurring over the special demands of Blacks had begun to creep into the work. An example of this was the fact that despite the active role the Party played in the struggle for the FEPC (an executive order to outlaw discrimination against Blacks in war industries), it found itself tailing the NAACP and A. Philip Randolph when it came to organizing support for the measure.

I saw these tendencies as deviations or individual mistakes which would be corrected—not as symptoms of a developing opportunist line, a pattern of abdicating the leading role of the Party.

Somewhat divorced from the struggle going on in the Party, Belle and I moved into an apartment on Forty-second Street and Crocker in the Central Avenue district, the heart of Los Angeles's Black ghetto. We immediately got to work, and in no time we were able to build up a Party branch of about fifty Blacks, some of the finest young people I have ever met. Most were from Oklahoma, Arkansas, Texas and Louisiana—part of the first wave of migrations to the new war industries in and around Los Angeles.

The branch secretary was one of the local people, with Belle as membership director and myself as education director. We held discussions and meetings on national and international problems, as well as questions confronting the community.

We were elated with our success, but it was not shared by the district office downtown. Pettis Perry had tried to direct the Afro-American work from his office, rather than establishing a base in the community. The work obviously suffered from this isolation and he was jealous of our success. Our house was always open to comrades and quickly became a center for activity in the area.

It wasn't long before we began hearing rumors which referred to Belle and myself as the "uptown braintrust" and accused us of "establishing a second center." Angered and fed up with those false charges, covert accusations and innuendos, I decided to get a job. Although my health seemed excellent, I was wary of my heart condition.

I went to the state rehabilitation office for a check-up to see if I was fit to work. To my surprise, I passed the examination with flying colors. The examining doctor told me my heart was in good condition and he saw no reason why I couldn't do anything I had done before. Encouraged, I asked if I could go to sea.

"Certainly, but I wouldn't advise you to be anything like a stevedore," he said. Still, I was told I was unable to join the Army.

SIGNING UP WITH THE NMU

In June 1943, I enlisted as a seaman in the Merchant Marine at San Pedro, California, the port of Los Angeles. Just as millions around the world, I wanted to make some contribution to the fight against fascism. I knew the history of struggle of the National Maritime Union and had long been an admirer of the militant seamen's union.

The NMU was the largest of all seamen's unions, reaching a membership of about 100,000 during the war. Its forerunner had been the Marine Workers Industrial Union, organized by the the SIU (an AFL-dominated seaman's union). The TUUL union dissolved and sent its membership into the SIU. They later helped to lead the rank-and-file revolt against the bureaucratic leadership of the SIU. This revolt led to the founding of the NMU as a CIO union in 1936. Its history was marked by bloody strikes in 1936 and 1937 in which several members were killed by thugs and police.

Through this fierce struggle and with the Party's correct leadership, the NMU became one of the most militant, dedicated and highly organized of all the CIO unions. The union was in the leadership of the anti-fascist movement both at home and abroad. It actively supported the anti-lynch bill, demanded full employment and a permanent FEPC. When Italian fascists invaded Ethiopia, NMU seamen refused to sail ships to Italy. Later they refused to sail steel-laden ships and tankers for Japan. In the midst of very important union struggles, some 800 union members left their picketlines for Spain. Over 200 died in the attempt to defeat the fascist offensive and prevent a new world war.

NMU seamen were known as worldwide emissaries of labor. They would contact local unions wherever they docked, offering assistance and support and often participating in labor marches and demonstrations.[6]

As head of the Party's Afro-American work, I had known many of the old-timers in the SIU and had worked with some of the men who helped to found the NMU. These included Al Lannon, Patty Whelan, Tom Ray, Johnny Rogan, Hursel Alexander, Roy Hudson, George Mink, Josh Lawrence and Ferdinand Smith. The latter two were Blacks and both were on the national board of the union. Smith became the national secretary and Josh, a boatswain, became port agent for the Great Lakes.

A few days after I enlisted, I signed on the Union Oil Company's tanker, *La Placentia.* I had no training besides as a waiter so I chose the job of crew messman, serving the crew at meals and cleaning up. I was the only Black in the crew. We were bound for Pearl Harbor and Honolulu. Our tanker served as mother ship for a dozen or so PT boats on their way to the Pacific war zone, refueling them on the voyage across and relying on them to serve as our escort.

These boats (patrol torpedo craft) were small, fast and heavily armed. They carried a minimal crew of three officers and eleven men. Armed with four torpedos, two rocket launchers, twenty millimeter anti-aircraft guns, thirty-seven millimeter cannon and fifty caliber machine guns, PT boats were pound-for-pound the most heavily armed ships in the war.

In the months following Pearl Harbor, the Japanese met with almost fantastic success in the Pacific and south Asia, despite the fact that their finest force, the Quantung Army, was tied down in north and east China by the armies of Russia and China. By May 1942, most of the major islands in the south Pacific had fallen to Japan, either wholly or in part. Bangkok, Hong Kong, Java, Wake, Guam and the Philippines were among the territories incorporated into Japan's "co-prosperity" empire. Australia was threatened with invasion from the north; Darwin, a northern port city, had already been attacked by the Imperial Air Force. When Burma fell to the Japanese, land supply routes to embattled China were effectively cut and Japan had a base from which to launch an invasion of India.

It wasn't until May 1942, at the battle of the Coral Sea, that the Japanese met their first big setback. It was here that they were prevented from taking Port Moresby, Papua, and possibly invading Australia. In the next few months, they suffered major defeats at Midway and Guadalcanal. As we headed into the Pacific war zone, ten months after Guadalcanal, the allies were preparing to launch their major offensive in the south Pacific.

After two weeks at sea, we landed at Pearl Harbor. In December 1941, it had been the scene of the massive Japanese raid on the Pacific fleet. Now, a year and a half later, the wreckage of Admiral Kimmel's once proud fleet was strewn over the harbor. Thousands of victims still lay in the hulls.

I went ashore with some shipmates. We took a bus to Honolulu, a few miles away. I found war-time Honolulu pretty drab. The streets, busses and amusement places were crowded with U.S. military and naval personnel.

We went into a bar on Bishop Street in downtown Honolulu and the white bartender-proprietor refused to serve me. He apologetically said that he had nothing against Blacks personally, but that there had been a bloody fight between Black and white soldiers there just a week before. For that reason he had decided not to serve Blacks at all. My white shipmates started to protest, but I said, "Aw, come on, don't bother." It wasn't worth the hassle. We just walked out and went to another bar.

The Marines and the Navy, serving as Shore Patrol in Pearl Harbor at the time, were generally arrogant and belligerent toward us civilian seamen. They called us draft dodgers, dollar chasers, reds and slackers. We had to swallow hard and just take it. If we fought back, we'd be thrown in the brig where we'd suffer even more abuse. We developed a real hatred for the Navy and the Marines.

Their hostility and the racism the military had brought over with it tended to sour my impressions of Hawaii. I had no regrets when, in a couple days we were on our way back to San Pedro. We returned without escort, having left the PT boats at Pearl Harbor to supplement the allies' Pacific fleet.

Two weeks later we left San Pedro again, retracing our last voyage back to Hawaii. By this time, the allies were engaged in fierce battles to retake the Japanese-occupied territories on New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. In six months, as the result of these and later actions, Japan's eastern front would be wide open.

We brought with us another escort of PT boats. Again we dropped the PT boats at Pearl Harbor, but this time we headed southwest to Pago Pago in the American Samoas. It was not a busy port, we were the only ship in the harbor. The Polynesians there were among the friendliest people I had ever met. They had light brown skin and looked like any mulatto that one might see on the streets of Harlem or Chicago's Southside. Families would invite us to visit their homes.

Our next port was Noumea, New Caledonia, a French possession about 800 miles east of Australia which had formerly been a penal colony. The New Caledonians were Melanesians, big fine looking Blacks with wooly hair. My interest in anthropology had led me to read extensively about these "Asian Negroes" and I was glad to have the opportunity to meet them first hand.

After about ten days there, discharging our fuel and refueling small naval craft coming in from the Solomons, we finally sailed out past the coral reefs and were on our way home.

At that time, merchant ships were more heavily armed than they had been earlier in the war. Our tanker mounted two three-inch cannons, fore and aft, and several twenty-millimeter rapid firing Swiss anti-aircraft guns. On our ship these guns were manned by a Navy gun crew of eighteen men commanded by a lieutenant junior grade. We merchant seamen performed a vital support role for the armed guard detachment. I served as assistant loader on one of the anti-aircraft guns.

In the early morning, about two days out of Noumea, a general alarm was sounded. An unidentified ship had been sighted on the horizon off the port bow. We all rushed to our battle stations and waited. In wartime, we had to maintain radio silence to avoid disclosing our position. We waited for the ship to come close enough to identify it. We knew we wouldn't have a chance against a Japanese warship; it would have blown us out of the water. We were all relieved when the alarm was finally called off, the vessel had been identified as the U.S. troop ship *West Point*.

Back home after a couple of weeks in Los Angeles, we got the news that a big troop ship was crewing up in San Pedro. It was the *Uruguay*, a former luxury liner on the New York-Buenos Aires run that had been leased to the military by Moore-McCormack lines. She had now been converted into a troop ship and had been carrying troops from the east coast to Oran and other ports in north Africa. Now she had come through the Panama Canal and around to the west coast.

Scuttlebutt had it that she was now to transport troops to the Pacific war zone. When they got the news that she was being transferred to the Pacific, half the original crew had gotten off in New York. She made the New York to San Pedro run with only half of her 450-man crew. She was carrying no troops at the time so it posed no big problem.

San Pedro was mainly a freighter and tanker port, supplying crews of between forty and sixty. The NMU local was hard put for men to fill out the *Uruguay's* large crew and for the new crew ratings required for a large troop transport. The local had to send to San Francisco to help fill out the crew.

The NMU port agent in San Pedro at the time was Oliver Boutée, a progressive minded Black from New Orleans. The chief union patrolman—the number one port union official under the port agent—was Neil Crow, a tough experienced seaman and a well-respected communist. The union was determined to put together the best possible crew for the *Uruguay* and started by lining up a solid nucleus of good union seamen. One reason for the special effort was the rumors of racketeering aboard the *Uruguay*. It was a good opportunity to clean up the ship.

Racketeering on board ships—mainly gambling and selling illegal liquor to troops—was a crucial issue for the National Maritime Union. It was a matter of principle—the honor of the union was at stake. In spite of the NMU's hundred percent backing of the war effort, merchant seamen were often the target of the kind of slanderous remarks I have already mentioned. Shipboard racketeering played into these slanders.

Racketeering also prevented the union from handling legitimate "beefs" about ship conditions. It divided the crew against itself and made it difficult to wage effective struggles to improve intolerable conditions; crowded and inadequately ventilated quarters, unsanitary heads, poor food and arbitrary disciplinary treatment from officers. Shipboard racketeers were strongly anti-union, undoubtedly often the result of deals made with the officers to look the other way from the rackets. Having never worked on a big ship, I was, at the time, only dimly aware of these problems and what they meant for the union.

ROUNDING THE CAPE

When the day arrived to crew up the *Uruguay,* the hiring hall was crowded. I recognized some familiar faces. Red Herrick was there, a veteran communist seaman and artist who had made the maiden voyage on the *Booker T. Washington.* The *Washington* was the first merchant ship to be commanded by a Black captain, Hugh Mulzac. Red was a fireman on the ship. I was surprised to see Hursel Alexander, a well-known Black communist leader from

Los Angeles who had never sailed before.

I stood in the crowded union hall, reading the long list of ratings that had to be filled. There were openings for cooks, bakers, waiters, pantrymen, utilitymen and others in the stewards' department. I knew my skills were limited, but I had no desire to take another messman job. Neil Crow approached me and said, "We really want you on that ship, Harry. Take the chief pantryman's job," he told me.

I hesitated, wondering why the job was posted when the third and fourth pantryman jobs were not. Why hadn't anyone from the old crew wanted to move up to chief pantryman? I didn't know if I was qualified; the job would put me in charge of about ten men, responsible for preparing salads and hors d'oeuvres, setting up and serving at steam tables and making beverages, coffee, tea and desserts for 400-500 officers.

Several friends of mine standing nearby also urged me to take the job. A young man whom I had just met in the hall, Herbert Jeffries, said, "I'll support you, Harry. I'll throw in my card for first pantryman."

With the promise of their support, I agreed. When the dispatcher called out, "chief pantryman," I stepped forward and threw in my card. No one else applied; there was no contest. I felt uneasy all over again, but I had the job.

Upon boarding ship, my ability to perform the chief pantryman's job was immediately challenged by the chef. He was an Argentinian, an old chef from the *Uruguay's* days as a luxury liner, and a rabid white chauvinist. When he saw me he scowled: "So you're the chief pantryman!" I said I was.

"Well, make me up four gallons of French dressing, four gallons of thousand island, four gallons of Russian dressing, a gallon of tartar sauce and four gallons of mayonnaise."

It was clearly a challenge to my ability, especially making mayonnaise from scratch. I was taken aback because I'd never done it before. I sought out Jeffries, who had promised to back me up, but he didn't know how to make mayonnaise either. Fortunately the second pantryman, a Swede, stepped in and saved the day. I passed the chef's "test" to his great disappointment and had no more problems of this type during the voyage.

We left San Pedro on November 9, 1943, bound for the South Pacific and eventually Bombay, India. Approximately 5,000 troops were on board. In contrast to the *La Placentia,* a large portion of *Uruguay's* crew was Black, especially in the stewards' department. On the first day out we organized a union ship committee which consisted of one delegate and an alternate delegate from each department—deck, engine and steward. A meeting of the crew was called and Red Herrick was elected ship chairman. The meeting was general, a statement of union principles was made, the need for a clean ship emphasized and every man urged to do his job. There was no controversy and it was uneventful.

Two or three days out, however, racketeering became *the* issue. My third and fourth pantrymen were arrested by the ship military police and charged with selling liquor to the soldiers. The military police had raided their bunkrooms and found the bulkheads packed with cases of liquor, a virtual warehouse of smuggled booze. How did they get all that contraband aboard, I wondered? Obviously these men had connections with shoreside gangsters. They were put in the brig for the remainder of the three month voyage. Now it was clear to me why these men had not put in for the chief pantryman's job. They didn't need the extra pay and didn't want the extra responsibility.

But this was not all. The ship was swarming with a number of rackets. There was a cigarette racket, controlled by a storeman. He smuggled aboard entire cases of cigarettes and, when we reached Bombay, sold them at fantastic profits. But the greatest of all the rackets was the nightly crap and poker games. They were run by two glory hole (crews' quarters) stewards, the lowest rating on the ship. The stewards were big-time professional gamblers and had the entire operation well organized. They were surrounded by toadies and sycophants who covered their jobs for them and even served them special food and the best scotch while they lay around all day in their bunks.

These men and their circle of cronies were corrupting a significant section of the crew and represented the main obstacle to any united action to improve conditions on the ship. In ship meetings they always were the greatest patriots and red-baited the union, warning against communists that were out to "disrupt" the ship. We struggled against these phonies during the entire three month voyage and after several tense incidents were finally able to isolate them.

Our first port of call was Hobart, Tasmania, an island southeast of Australia on the Tasman Sea. A few days before arriving, we picked up two Army transports which continued sailing with us all the way to Bombay.

Our stay was short, only twenty-four hours, but a welcome break after the long, lonely Pacific crossing. Hobart, a very pleasant town, was a resort and vacation area for Australians.

Leaving Hobart, we stood for Freemantle, the port of Perth on the west coast of Australia, sailing the rough seas of the Great Australian Bight. In Perth, I had my first impressions of Australia. It seemed a white man's country to me then—I never saw any of the native inhabitants—but strangely I felt no antagonism. On the contrary, everyone was very friendly toward us Black seamen.

We were aware of the immigration bar against Asians and Blacks which was rigidly enforced. When asked about this, the Aussies assured us it wasn't a racist law—"It's got nothing to do with you guys...and certainly we're friendly with the Chinese."

I thought to myself, "Well they should be, for the Chinese were a major factor in preventing a Japanese fascist invasion of Australia by pinning down Japan's main armies in north China."

They told us, "It's a law brought in by the labor government to prevent Australian capitalists from importing coolie labor and undercutting the white Australian workers." The irony of this explanation didn't even occur to the Australians.

We found ourselves warmly greeted as we went sightseeing through the city of Perth. Several members of an Australian artillery regiment invited us to "bring all our friends" and come to a dance that night at their barracks just outside of Freemantle. We turned out in large numbers and were waltzing Matildas all night long. It was a great party and didn't break up until nearly daylight. When we sailed several days later, we bid them all goodbye.

We were glad to see the two Dutch cruisers that would escort us to Bombay. We felt these were particularly hostile waters since much of the territory on the coast of the Bay of Bengal was occupied by the Japanese, as were the Andaman Islands some 1,800 miles east of India. Even now, as we sailed through the Indian Ocean with our "cargo" of U.S. troops bound for Bombay, the Japanese were massing their forces in Burma preparatory to invading eastern India.

Six weeks out of San Pedro, we docked in Bombay. I wanted to find the Communist Party headquarters to see if it would be possible to meet with some of the Indian comrades I had known at KUTVA. This proved to be a simple task. I asked a longshoreman who gave me directions to the Party headquarters. Several comrades, Hursel Alexander, Red Herrick and I went downtown and found the Party headquarters. It was an impressive four or five story building on a main street, a red flag with hammer and sickle flying from its roof.

Walking in, we identified ourselves to the first person we saw—a young man who turned out to be a member of the Central Committee of the Indian Party. I explained that we were American communists and that I was interested in seeing some of the Indians I had known in Moscow. I didn't know their real names, but I gave the young man several descriptions. He asked what years I had been in Moscow. When I said 1926-30, his face showed real interest.

"Well," he said, "I think something can be arranged. Why don't you and your friends come back here at about six o'clock for dinner?"

Hursel, myself and several others came back that evening and went upstairs. We took our shoes off in the hall as was the custom; and entered in our stocking feet. There they were, my old friends from Moscow. Nada, a beautiful Indian woman, rushed to embrace me. There was Sakorov, my old roommate and close friend, one of the founders of the Indian C.P. He told me he was now on the Central Committee and was Party representative to the National Indian Congress for the Bombay District.

There was also Patel, who had toured the United States before the war as a representative of Indian students. His tour had been sponsored by the American Youth Congress. He was now Communist Party district organizer for Bombay. There were also several of the old Sikhs who grabbed me, "Harry! Harry!" My friends sat us down and we all ate and swapped tales about old times and about the political situation in our respective countries.

Nada was now president of the Bombay chapter of the Friends of the Soviet Union. Before, she had been a nationally known communist youth leader. She invited us to come visit a group at the University of Bombay. The next day we met with a bunch of young students there and talked politics over cups of Indian tea.

Our troops disembarked at Bombay and after about six days we pulled out of the harbor with a very light load; a handful of passengers, a few military hospital patients and some diplomatic types. We headed for Capetown, sailing down through the Indian Ocean ever watchful for Japanese submarines which had been reported off Madagascar. As we neared Capetown, a notice appeared on the ship's bulletin board, something to the effect that "the people of South Africa have certain customs and laws as to race. While they are not ours, we should all respect them, remember we are in their country and don't start any trouble."

A bunch of us, about half Black and half white, got off the ship together and went straight into a dockside bar. No sooner did we get in than the bartender started yelling, "Now wait a minute, fellows, the Blacks over here and the whites over there."

Some of our white shipmates started to protest, but we Blacks said, "What the hell, we want a drink, man. We know this is South Africa. Damn it, you know we can't fight this thing now—let's get a drink." We settled for salutes across the bar.

I went up to the Sixth District, Capetown's Black ghetto, with some of my Black shipmates. I was never so depressed in my life. The oppression of the people was complete. I'd seen nothing like it, even in "darkest Mississippi." There Blacks at least had some kind of cultural institutions—churches, lodges and so forth. Here they had nothing. They had been forced from the land and pushed into oppressive native "reserves." These reserves in turn served as labor reservoirs for the city, where blacks were crowded into ghettos and their tribal structures and institutions completely destroyed. Their culture had been stolen from them. Whites were warned not to go into the area after dark, as a number of whites had been murdered there. This seemed like a kind of spontaneous rebellion to me.

As I walked down the street, I heard two Blacks speaking in a strange and beautiful language. I stopped and asked them what it was. They answered in perfect English that it was Xhosa, their tribal language. It sounded almost musical to me.

Back downtown, I went into a restaurant for natives, but the white owner refused to serve me. " But I'm Black," I protested. "Yeah, but you're not one of ours."

I made my way to the Communist Party headquarters and was surprised to find that like in Bombay, it was located on a main street downtown. There was a young white woman at the office to whom I introduced myself. She seemed to recognize my name. She was the wife of an Indian member of the Central Committee. She said, "It's so unfortunate that you came through at this particular time. All the Central Committee people are in Jo'burg. There's a big plenum going on this weekend. I'm sure my husband and others would have liked to have met you."

I asked about some of the South Africans I had known in Moscow. She said that Bunting had died and that Roux was no longer in the Party, but still friendly.

"What's this I hear about the Party in America?" she asked. I said that I didn't know what she meant. "Well, it came over the radio last night that your Party is dissolving itself!"

This all came as a great surprise and shock to me. It was hard to believe. I knew there had been some backsliding and a general move to the right. But dissolve the Party? I wondered if there could have been some misunderstanding.

Before we boarded ship, we all met at the USO by the docks. This was the first time since we had come ashore that Black and white shipmates had been able to get together. We made the most of it, drinking beer and swapping stories. Herb Jeffries, a very light-skinned Black man with blondish hair and blue eyes, was a target of a lot of kidding. Herb's brother, Howard, was a nationally-known singer with the Duke Ellington band.

When we had split up on leaving the dockside bar, Herb had no choice but to go with the whites. Now we had some fun at his expense. "You goddamn white son-of-a-bitch, you ratted on us. You left your own race."

"You ran out on us at the docks, man. I don't think we'll let you back in the race," said Hursel.

Herb was embarrassed and kind of felt bad. "What was I gonna do, man?" he asked. "They wouldn't serve me with you guys." Hursel winked at me and we kept putting poor Herb on for some some time. What he said was true, though. In South Africa, he couldn't pass for Black.

The struggle against the racketeers had been going on since we left San Pedro, and by the time we left Capetown we had them pretty well isolated. We had the goods on them and they knew it. We had built up a core of about twenty-five guys who played a leading role in the fight for better conditions and against these crooks.

Things were tense though. One evening I was on deck, leaning on the rail, when Red came up from the engine room. "Harry," he said, "be careful about getting too near that rail at night. We're in the middle of a hell of a fight and those bastards would love to dump you over!"

The ship's committee met to draw up charges against the racketeers. Two or three of them were direct accusations. Clearly, we said, the racketeers were literally robbing the soldiers with their fixed games. They were obstructing the fight for better conditions on board by setting shipmates against each other. And finally, they were besmirching the name of the union.

As we headed up the south Atlantic, we called a general meeting to present the charges. A group of us got together beforehand to talk over the issues. Red Herrick, the ship chairman, was there as was Hursel Alexander. Hursel was short, not more than five feet four inches, with broad shoulders and a big roaring voice. He'd been one of the Party's finest orators. Red said, "After all these points are made I want you to sum it up, Hursel. Really stir the crew up. Then, when you're through, I'll call for a vote right away."

Red chaired the meeting and read the charges. Everybody had a say and most everybody spoke against the racketeers. As I recall, they weren't there, but their toadies did their red-baiting for them. The discussion went on for a considerable time. Finally Red recognized Hursel and that clinched it. The crew confirmed the charges and referred the crooks to a shoreside committee of the union for trial.

Crossing the Caribbean, we were anticipating the time when we'd return to San Pedro and get rid of these parasites. This would be no problem since San Pedro was a small port and union grievances could be processed quickly. We thought we had everything sewn up. Then one night, while several of us were standing on deck, one old seaman noticed, "We're not sailing through any damn Panama Canal. We're too far north. Look at those lights; there's St. Thomas and that's Puerto Rico. We're going to New York, man!"

As the word spread, the crooks started getting cocky again. They knew the ropes in New York and stood a better chance of stalling things in such a large port. A few days later, the ship docked at the military base on Staten Island. Normally, crews were paid off at the end of a voyage with a union patrolman present who was able to handle grievances. But the military authorities would not allow our patrolman aboard ship. The crew was paid off outside the base and everyone who had been active in our union caucus was fired for "inefficiency." By the time we could get through the red tape to raise the issues, the *Uruguay* was off shore, on its way to Oran, Algeria. The racketeers sailed with the ship while we were left in New York.

We put up at the Broadway Central Hotel and stayed there a couple of weeks. Nothing could be done about our grievances. Most of the guys went back to San Pedro—the shipping administration gave first class fare back to your home port. I decided to stay in New York and take advantage of the union's program for members to upgrade their skills as cooks and bakers. I spent a month at Manual Arts High School on Thirteenth Street near Seventh Avenue, learning the rudiments of baking.

While I was in New York I went to see Bill Foster and check on what I'd heard in South Africa, about the Party being dissolved. I went up to the ninth floor of the Party headquarters on East Thirteenth Street.

There was Foster, alone in his office, his feet on the desk, his hat pulled down to his eyes. He appeared to be in deep thought. "Hello, Harry, I hear you're a seaman now," he said.

I told him I'd just returned from an around the world voyage, and we talked awhile about the sea. Foster had years before been a sailor himself. Finally I told him what I heard in South Africa about the Party being dissolved.

"Yes," he said, "that is what Browder has in mind." When I asked what he planned to do about it, he said, "Let's take a walk, the walls have ears..."

As we walked down University Place toward Washington Square, Foster explained how he saw Browder's line. "It's a rightist line," I recall him saying. "One that just tails behind the bourgeoisie. He thinks they will voluntarily stick to the Teheran agreements. Browder is pushing the line that the American capitalists—for their own best interests—will continue the unity of the big three [the U.S., USSR and Great Britain—ed.] after the war is over. He wants us to continue the no-strike pledge, and is saying that there won't be any more economic crises or wars or class conflicts—only peace and prosperity."

Foster told me how Browder was then proposing to change the Party into an "association," for this was in line with his view that the two-party system is adequate. What it all came down to is that he not only wanted to dissolve the Party—he wanted to liquidate Marxism.

Again I asked Foster what he was planning to do. I remember that his greatest concern was to avoid a split in the Party in the middle of a war.

"But," I asked, "isn't Browder going to dissolve the Party in the middle of the war? There certainly is an opposition, why not lead it?"

He hedged, saying Browder was looking for the chance to expel him. By this time, we had returned to the Party headquarters. We agreed to keep in touch. What I did not know then was that Foster had written a letter to the National Committee opposing Browder's line. This letter was read at the Political Committee a few days before our conversation on February 8, 1944, and was opposed by every other committee member except Sam Darcy of Pennsylvania. Further, it had been made clear at the time that Foster would be expelled if he attempted to take the struggle against Browder to the rank and file.

This was a difficult time for me. I knew from discussions with others, especially seamen, that there was fairly widespread opposition to Browder's position. But no one was sure what to do. The opposition existed, but it had no leadership. Browder was systematically violating democratic centralism by stifling any thorough discussion of his new policies. Thus the opposition in various parts of the country remained isolated from each other. I found myself feeling very much like many others. Browder's business was really bad, but it was being steamrollered through. At the time, it seemed the only thing that could be done was to bide our time, waiting for events to expose Browder's opportunism.

LIFE ABOARD THE ERICSSON

Late in March 1944, I signed on as assistant baker on the *John Ericsson*, for the first of four voyages on that ship.

This was the period of preparation for the long-awaited second front in the European war. This had been deliberately delayed by Britain and the U.S. since 1917. The dominant theme in the relations between imperialist countries and the Soviet Union had been the former's desire to crush the world's first socialist state. The earliest manifestation of this had been their pouring over 900,000 troops into the Soviet Union in the early twenties to aid the white armies in the civil war. When the Red Army proved indomitable, their policy took the form of economic embargos and diplomatic boycotts. During the period of the Third Reich, the British, French and American governments saw their chance to move against the Soviets through a third party.

Thus, when Nazi Germany rose to become a major power, the imperialist powers followed a policy of appeasement and financial support, hoping to induce the Germans to turn eastward. The U.S., Britain and France refused to take action against Germany's illegal remilitarization, its reoccupation of the Rhineland, its support of the fascist invasions of Ethiopia and China, and its direct intervention in Spain.

The day after Hitler attacked the Soviet Union, this policy was articulated by then Senator Harry Truman who said, "If we see that Germany is winning we ought to help Russia, and if Russia is winning, we ought to help Germany."[7]

Even when circumstances forced Britain, France and the United States to ally themselves with the Soviet Union against the axis powers, this policy continued. The most striking example of this was their refusal to open up the second front in Europe until three years after the Nazi invasion of Russia. The Soviets thus bore the main brunt of the anti-fascist fight, and the number killed, perhaps 18,000,000, was twenty-seven times the total U.S. and English deaths combined.

By the time the second front was finally opened, the Red Army had already broken the back of Hitler's Wehrmacht at Moscow, Leningrad and Stalingrad, and had crossed into Poland on its way to Berlin. The decision to land troops at Normandy was prompted as much by the British and American imperialists' desire to prevent a Soviet sweep to the Atlantic as by their desire to shorten the war. It is, in fact, estimated that their delay in opening the second front prolonged the war by a full year.

The *Ericsson* was formerly a Swedish luxury liner, now leased to the U.S. as a troop ship. She usually carried about 5,000 troops on her trips from New York to Liverpool. We would go in a big convoy with a number of other troop ships and a number of escort vessels. The allies by that time were building up for the opening of the second front and the invasion of Normandy, which was to take place in June of that year. It took us about a month to make the round trip. We'd drop the troops in Liverpool and then sail up to Scotland.

There were four or five bakers and assistants in the *Ericsson's* baking department. The chief baker was a Swede named Vidal. He had been chief baker on the *Ericsson* when it was a luxury liner. He was a fine pastry chef and we baked bread for the whole ship, pastry for the officers.

Vidal outdid himself, making chocolate eclairs, bismarcks and Danish pastry. I loved the work and by the time I got off that ship, I could make all kinds of pastries. Vidal was a good teacher, but he was a little sore that all the young guys were learning so fast. He was from the old school and had been apprenticed to a baker at the age of twelve.

He used to tell us how the chief baker would stride in with his head up in the air and all the boys would greet him, "Good morning, Herr Chief Baker."

"I had to wash pans for a year before they'd even let me touch the dough," he would tell us, "and now you guys come on here and expect to be bakers in a few months."

I also met Jake "the bread baker" Rabinowitz on the *Ericsson*. He was a specialist in sour dough bread. He'd come up the gangplank with a little satchel and all the old bakers would say, "Here comes Jake with that same old mother dough he's had for twenty-five years."

After we dropped the troops off we had a chance to see Liverpool. It was an old port city which had suffered heavily from Hitler's blitz and large sections of the city lay in ruins. The pubs were fascinating places. They were real social centers where people spent the evening drinking beer and playing darts. The British were polite and someone would always come up to my table and strike up a conversation. Perhaps because I was Black, they would often raise criticisms of Americans which they didn't mention to my white shipmates. They couldn't stand the way some Americans were always boasting and carrying on about American superiority. The British were proud too, but in a quiet way.

"What's wrong with the Yanks?" I'd ask when the subject came up.

"They're over paid, over sexed and over here," came the reply.

The German counter-offensive at the Battle of the Bulge was going on and the British followed it carefully. "The Yanks are getting it now," they'd say. "Americans were so critical of our fighting, but they're finding out it's no easy road."

When we'd leave Liverpool, we'd go up to Glasgow, Scotland, and pick up German prisoners and wounded. It was easier to take them back to the U.S. than to ship food over for them. As our ship pulled out of Gourock, Glasgow's port, the German prisoners would be assembled on the deck.

We'd ask, "Are there any bakers here?" Inevitably some would step forward because they knew they'd get better food if they worked in the kitchen. So on the return voyages we ship's bakers could take it easy.

There were a lot of good fellows in our crew, but we were slow getting the ship organized. After my first voyage I got in touch with Al Lannon, the Party's waterfront organizer and member of the Central Committee. I asked about the possibility of getting one or two good Party men aboard to help us make the *Ericsson* a model union ship.

"Who's in port here?" I asked Al.

"I'll tell you just the guy you need. It's Harry Rubin."

"I'm not sure I know him."

"He's a man with tremendous drive and a hell of a dynamic organizer," Al said. "You put him on that ship and he'll be a real help. But I should warn you, he has a kind of puritanical streak. After a while he may do something or other and get himself isolated from the rest of the crew. You can use him for a couple of voyages, though."

Rubin was a little fellow who walked with a limp as a result of being wounded in Spain. He signed on as wiper in the engine room, the lowest job there. Sure enough, he helped whip the whole thing together in short order. In no time at all we had the whole ship tightly organized. The committees and delegates in all the departments were functioning well. The crew was up to standard. We presented and won many grievances and improved the food and living conditions. There were classes for the crew on union history and improving technical skills. As educational director, I taught a course on the nature of fascism.

A couple of voyages later, there was an incident which proved Lannon's cautions about Rubin to be correct. Rubin charged two

Puerto Rican crew members with selling a couple pints of liquor to two of the soldiers on board. The union had a strict policy on this sort of racketeering, but the attitude of most of the crew was, "We don't want to press this too hard. It's just a small case. Just tell them they can't do it anymore." There were no big racketeers aboard.

But Rubin took a hard line. He insisted that charges be brought against them and that they stand trial before the union port committee in New York. There was a division on the ship's committee and many of us thought we should be a little flexible in this situation, but in the end we followed Rubin's lead.

The incident made for hard feeling among the crew and divided the ship which we had worked so hard to organize. The union meeting on board which we called to discuss the charges was very heated. The defendants claimed the charges were an example of discrimination against Puerto Ricans. There were about fifty Puerto Ricans in the crew and about the same number of Blacks.

The defendants were able to line most of them up on their side. In truth, Puerto Ricans and Blacks had some real grievances. They were mostly in the steward's department and many lived way down in the glory hole, the worst section of the ship. Also, the "evidence" against the defendants was flimsy and consisted of two affidavits signed by two soldiers long gone from the ship. The crew was split down the middle, and when the vote was called as to whether the defendants should be charged and stand trial in New York, about sixty percent voted no.

In later voyages, we were able to unite the crew under our leadership again. Rubin, however, didn't sign on again because he, more than any of us, had isolated himself from the rest of the crew.

I quit the *Ericsson* in early September, 1944. I planned to return to Los Angeles, but I had followed the Soviet counter-offensive with intense interest. The victories at Stalingrad and Leningrad and in the Crimea had pushed the Germans back beyond the border. Thus, I was determined to make the Murmansk run before I returned to the west coast.

I went down to the union hall on West Seventeenth Street. No one told where a ship was bound during the war, but when the dispatcher called out, “Here’s that cold run. Get your heavy underwear on,” everyone knew what he meant.

I wanted to sign on as second cook and baker, but that job was already taken. The only rating I could take was crew messman, so I threw in my card. The ship was the *Winfred L. Smith,* docked in Jersey. I packed my bag, being sure to include my Russian grammar book and dictionary, and a Russian edition of Tolstoy’s *War and Peace* so that I could bone up on my once fluent knowledge of Russian. I then hurried to New Jersey and signed on.

We sailed on September 26, 1944, for Halifax, Nova Scotia, where the convoy assembled. We had a heavy escort of destroyers, cruisers, and corvettes as we headed for Glasgow, Scotland. After docking at Gourock on the Clyde, we headed north along the Scottish coast to Lock Ewe, where we reassembled for the last leg of the Murmansk run. A British commodore took over command of the convoy, calling a conference of captains to explain the procedures and route for making the dangerous run through the Norwegian Sea, around the North Cape to the Kola Inlet and Murmansk.

Leaving Lock Ewe, we were a formidable convoy of about thirty ships in all. Our escort vessels included, frigates, destroyers, corvettes and “baby” air craft carriers (escort carriers). The cargo ships were also armed. Our liberty ship had, in addition to the normal crew of forty-four men, a navy gun crew of eighteen which manned the two three-inch fifty caliber-type cannons, several twenty-millimeter Oerlikon anti-aircraft guns and lighter caliber machine guns.

The convoy, we understood, was also given distant cover by a British battleship and cruiser of the home fleet, which lay just out of sight. Further protection was afforded by the winter solstice which provided virtually twenty-four hours of darkness.

The crew’s quarters were midship, the portholes looking out on the aft deck cargo. There were several narrow gauge train engines lashed to the deck. Heading northeast, we entered the Norwegian Sea, one of the world’s stormiest seas. It didn’t take much imagination to visualize the engines breaking loose and crashing through our bunks. It certainly didn’t make for a relaxed voyage, but then neither did the Germans.

German sub packs hounded us throughout the voyage. Our reminder of their presence was the constant dropping of depth charges which shook everything and everyone on ship as the bulkheads quivered and the deck plates rattled. But we were lucky. It was later revealed that no less than eighteen U-boats were lying in ambush for our convoy. When we arrived in Murmansk, we learned that only one escort frigate had been damaged by a torpedo.

Our convoy was routed unusually close to the Norwegian coast, probably not more than seventy-five miles offshore. The normal route took convoys far from German occupied Norway. It was understood that we were attempting to lure the battleship *Von Tirpitz* out of the fjords. A year before, her sister ship, the *Scharnhorst* had slipped out to attack a similar convoy and, after a long chase, was sunk by the British Navy. But this time the *Von Tirpitz* did not accept the challenge and remained in the fjord.

Off North Cape we were attacked by a formation of sixteen German torpedo bombers. General alarm was sounded. I rushed to my position as assistant loader on the Oerlikon gun, life jacket slung around my neck and rubber suit under my arm. The engagement lasted only a few minutes. Heavy fire from our entire convoy quickly brought down three planes and drove the others off. They did manage to drop a few torpedoes, but they went astray, doing no damage.

We finally dropped anchor in the Kola Inlet in early November. Half our convoy, including our ship, unloaded our cargo in Murmansk. The remaining ships sailed across the White Sea and on to Archangel. Our first sight of Murmansk was the badly battered dock and railroad spurs. It was a prime target for the Luftwaffe, which had a base in Petsamo, Finland, barely sixty miles from Murmansk. By the time I got there, the Soviets had installed so many heavy anti-aircraft guns and had brought down so many planes that the bombing was greatly reduced.

At last we were ashore in Murmansk. Formerly the Russians had given a $125 bonus to each seaman for making the run. This was a gesture of appreciation and provided money to spend in port. But at the behest of the U.S. government, they had stopped this practice. We drew money from the captain to spend ashore.

At last ashore, the Russian language sounded beautiful to me. On the voyage over I had spent several hours a day boning up on my Russian. Once ashore, I became fluent again and found myself translating for my shipmates.

There was no doubt Murmansk was a front line town. There were only two places to go for relaxation and diversion. There was the International Seamen's Club and the International Hotel. At the club there were often American movies and dances on a Saturday night.

The crews from the convoy crowded into the Seamen's Club and were soon drinking the good old Russian vodka. But we soon discovered that vodka, unlike whisky, was not a liquor to be drunk neat as was the American custom. Under the influence of the vodka the meekest fellows soon became roaring lions. Several fights broke out. The Russians looked on with amazement at this.

"What's the matter with you Americans? " they asked after finding that I could speak Russian. "Can't you take your liquor?"

"Ah well, they're just blowing off steam after the terrible tension of the voyage," I answered.

Thereafter, the Russians restricted the Americans to one drink of vodka in the club, which was equivalent to a double in our measure. On our part, a few of us union guys got together and constituted ourselves as an ad hoc committee to maintain order ashore. We served notice that henceforth any seaman who caused trouble and was giving the crew a bad name would have his shore leave taken away for the duration of our stay in port. We posted notices to that effect on the bulletin board of the club. The Russians were very pleased with our self-disciplinary action.

My Russian came right back and I spent a lot of time in the clubs and met a whole number of Russians. They took me around to the factories and Russian clubs. Among my friends was the ship chandler who took me out to his home and introduced me to his family. I was sitting in his office one day when two white American seamen came in. They asked the chandler if he could sell them some vodka. He told them that he wasn't permitted to sell to individuals, that they would have to get a permit from the captain of the ship. The chandler could understand a lot of English but he couldn't speak the language, so I volunteered to translate. My proffered help was met by a hostile stare by these two drunks. I heard their drawl and knew where they were from. One, the most belligerent, glared at me.

"Who's talkin' to you? Keep out of this," he growled.

"Well, I know Russian and thought I could help you."

"We don't need your help. We're from Texas."

"Well, good," I rejoined, "some of my best friends are from Texas."

I stood up and put my hand on the water bottle on the chandler's desk. They turned and walked out of the place.

The chandler was taking it all in, apprehensive that something was going to happen. "Comrade," he said, "I'm so glad you didn't allow yourself to be provoked."

He told me that a year ago, a Black seaman had been killed right there in Murmansk by white seamen. "Do Black people always have to fear for their lives in the United States?" he asked, puzzled.

"Well, one can expect attack at anytime, but not all whites are hostile. And Blacks have their own communities."

He seemed puzzled by the whole thing. "I guess it's like the Jews under the old regime," he said.

"Precisely," I agreed.

I went over to the International Hotel and joined some of my white shipmates sitting around a table. I told them about what had happened at the chandler's. Just then the two fellows came in and sat down at the next table. One of my mates, a reconstructed Southerner—Texas Red we called him—got up and started talking loudly about "god damn rednecks." The two slunk out of the bar and that was the end of it. We figured they were members of the SIU, a Jim Crow seamen's union.

Another night I came into the International Hotel and after checking my boots and coat, I saw a group of young Russians, men and women, standing in the lobby. It was on the eve of the anniversary of the Russian Revolution. They saw me speaking Russian to the attendant, so one young Russian approached me.

He was a small fellow, dressed in the Georgian manner with long coat, hat and soft Caucasian boots.

"I think I know you," he said. "Weren't you in Moscow some years back?"

"Yes, I was," I answered, surprised.

"Don't you remember my sisters Vera and Era?" Vera and Era were two young women in our circle.

"Oh yes," I said, "how are they?"

"I was just a small boy when you would come around. Vera married Patterson, the American Black man who came over with the film troupe. He died in the evacuation from Moscow."

"Oh, I'm sorry," I said. "How is she doing now?"

"Fine," he said. "She has a nice apartment and her two sons are coming along well."

I was just about to ask about Ina, who had also been a part of that same circle, when he broke off, explaining that he had to go to a performance as he was a member of a dance troupe.

"Meet me back here tomorrow night," he said.

I came back to the hotel the next night, but he wasn't there. He probably had another performance. I didn't know his name or how to ask for him. Sadly, I never saw him again.

Not too long after we arrived in Murmansk, we received word that the *Von Tirpitz* had been sunk (November 12, 1944) in a successful attack by twenty-eight Lancaster bombers of the Royal Air Force. This was certainly welcome news for it meant the end of the major German naval threat to convoys on the Murmansk run. We were relieved to know our return trip would not be threatened.

The human enemy was more or less taken care of, but the old enemy, the sea itself, was there to be reckoned with. The Norwegian Sea was a brutal sea, particularly rough at that time of year. Terrible gales buffeted the convoy and dispersed it over the whole area. Separated from the rest of the ships, we were forced to run alone. The decks, fore and aft, were awash continuously. We struggled into Loch Ewe one by one.

The return voyage was fairly uneventful. But even that late in the war, German submarines were still a very real threat. I remember we were almost home, just off Buzzards Bay in

Massachusetts. There was a submarine scare, and depth charges shook the whole ship violently. One of our mates, a fireman, was down in his quarters counting up his hours. He came up frustrated as hell, "Everytime I started counting, a depth charge would go off and I'd have to start all over."

It was seventeen below when we docked in Portland, Maine, on January 11, 1945. That night we took the train to New York City. The Russians had given every seaman at Murmansk a gallon of good vodka. On the way down to New York we broke them open and shared them with the passengers. The first thing we did when we got off the train was go to the Cafe Society downtown and see Billie Holiday, the Black singer.

After a week or ten days in New York, I took the train home to Los Angeles. I was happy to return to Belle and we had a warm reunion, exchanging stories, discussing the war and the political developments.

It wasn't long before I became anxious to get back to sea. In March I signed on a motorship we called the *Turk's Knot*. It was smaller than the liberty ship, but brand new, just out of the yards. It carried the most modern equipment, along with a crew of thirteen plus the naval gun crew.

We sailed in early March for the Pacific war zone. It was understood that our destination would be the Philippines, with stops in Honolulu, Wake, the Truk Islands and Guam. Our ship would then shuttle between New Guinea and Manila carrying installations and other war materiel the Americans had been forced to leave behind as they moved northward island by island.

Our first stop in the Philippines was the port city of Cebu, located on an island of the same name, right in the center of the Philippine Archipelago. Cebu was next to the island of Mactun. There in 1521, Magellan was killed while circumnavigating the earth for the first time.

Cebu, surrounded by lush tropics, was a beautiful town as were its people. Paul, our Filipino chief cook, took me on the rounds of the town, introducing me to many friendly and hospitable people.

We left Cebu for Manila, the capital city on the big island of Luzon. The Bay of Manila was clogged with sunken vessels, a virtual graveyard of ships. They were undoubtedly an overspill from the crucial battle for the Gulf of Leyte, which took place on the eastern side of the islands in October 1944. It was here that Admiral Nimitz's fleet had put the finish on the Japanese Navy and MacArthur's troops returned as he had vowed.

The wreckage was so great we had to anchor a mile or two out in the harbor and go into town on water taxis.

In Manila, a friend and I ran into a group of revolutionary students and intellectuals who had ties with the Hukbalahap guerillas, or "Huks." They had been active in the anti-Japanese resistance movement and bitter struggles against the traitorous compradors and landlords who had aided them. They told us how, after the Huks and the underground had helped to recapture Manila, they had been disarmed by American troops. They were bitter and sharply critical of MacArthur's hostility toward the popular democratic movement. His clear intention was to return to the status quo of colonialism. They gave us lots of their literature and during the following months of our shuttle we saw them whenever we were in Manila.

From Manila we would sail southward to New Guinea. Stopping at the small port towns of Hollandia, Wewak and Oro Bay, all on the north coast of New Guinea, we would gather our cargo of war materiel and return to Manila. The round trip of some thirty-six hundred miles would take about fourteen to twenty days.

HOMECOMING AT WAR'S END

In April we received news that Roosevelt had died. The news saddened the crew, everyone seemed to realize that Roosevelt's death marked the end of an era.

Early in the summer a letter from Belle reached me in Holland. My fears were realized—the Communist Party had been dissolved and the Communist Political Association (CPA) had been founded in April 1944. Belle informed me of the recently published Duclos letter and the removal of Earl Browder from leadership. Duclos, then secretary of the French Communist Party, sent a letter to the National Board of the CPA which was received on May 20. In this letter he characterized Browder's Teheran thesis and the subsequent dissolution of the Party as a "notorious revision of Marxism."[8] The publication of the letter opened a floodgate of criticism with regards to Browder's position. It came at a time when events were rapidly proving that his theories of "class peace" and national unity under the leadership of the monopolists were grossly incorrect and did not in any way correspond to reality.

The Duclos letter opened the way for struggle in opposition to Browder. The groundswell of opposition reached the national leadership and led to the Emergency Convention of July 26-28, 1945, where the errors of the past were exposed and the Party was reconstituted.

I was very excited by this letter and anxious to return to the States. I was not disappointed, therefore, when we learned that our ship had developed engine trouble and our scheduled twelve to eighteen month voyage would be cut short.

We had scarcely left New Guinea on the trip home when news came over the ship's radio that an atom bomb had been dropped on Hiroshima. It was August 6, 1945. Three days later we learned that a second and more powerful bomb had been dropped at Nagasaki. We knew then that it would not be long before the Japanese surrendered.

What we didn't know and what has generally been overlooked is that the day after Hiroshima the Russians invaded Manchuria in a powerful two-pronged offensive. The devastation wreaked by the atom bombs was indescribable, but its details were not fully known, either in Japan or the United States, until months afterward. But everyone in Japan was aware of the Russian invasion and it was probably this threat of war on two fronts which was a considerable factor in forcing Japan to accept the reality of its defeat.[9]

I landed in San Francisco on August 24, 1945, ten days after VJ day. I immediately called Belle and she came up to meet me. The emergency convention to reconstitute the Party had taken place the month before. For the first time I was able to study the Duclos letter, as well as the documents from the convention. Included in these was the letter written by Foster, opposing Browder's Teheran thesis. Foster had submitted the letter on Jan. 20, 1944, to the National Committee where it was rejected overwhelmingly. It was not until the emergency convention that this letter was made public and anyone outside of the National Committee knew of Foster's opposition to Browder.[10]

We spent a week or so relaxing and discussing what we should be doing now. We decided to go back to New York. I went first to find an apartment. Belle packed up our belongings in Los Angeles and closed the apartment.

Chapter 20

Browder's Treachery

When I arrived in New York in early September 1945, I went directly to Party headquarters on East Thirteenth Street. The receptionist informed me that Foster was expected at any moment and told me to have a seat. A few minutes later Foster appeared, looking haggard and tired.

I rushed to greet him with a warm, "Hello, Bill!"

He looked up, a frown crossing his face as he extended a cold, limp hand. "Hello, Harry, what are you doing here? I thought you were out on the coast."

"I just got in from six months in the Pacific," I explained. "I came east to see what the Party wants me to do in this fight against Browderism, what my assignment should be."

His frown deepened. "You had trouble in New York. You had trouble in Baltimore. You had trouble in California. Now I suppose you've come here to make some more trouble," he said accusingly.

I was taken aback, flabbergasted, but before I could protest he snapped, "I don't have time to talk now, I've got a meeting. You'll have to come back later." He turned and strode away.

Stunned by the brush-off, I left the office. I didn't know what to make of it. Foster had never been a warm person, but he had always been friendly to me before. I guessed that his cold reception reflected a change in the internal Party situation. The Emergency Convention to reconstitute the Party had taken place a little over a month before and undoubtedly the new National Board had discussed the Party cadre. I suspected Foster's remarks reflected a hostile attitude on the part of the new leadership toward me.

I decided to find out what was going on. Throughout the war, I had been pretty much out of touch with the developments in the Party and felt strongly it was time to get back into things. When I discussed the Party situation with friends, I found most were dissatisfied with the manner in which the struggle against Browderism was being conducted. But it was not until a decade later that I and other comrades were able to fully understand the effect of Browderism on the Party.

Much of the history of the struggle against Browder's revisionist line has been obscured by distorted and self-serving interpretations written by right opportunists and professional anti-communists. I want to trace this history as I now see it—from the point of view of the left, that is, the tendency which fought for a Marxist-Leninist line against the revisionism of the time. Much of the analysis of the inner-Party struggles of those fateful war and immediate post-war years, of course, benefits from hindsight. Browder's revisionism first appeared as a rounded-out theory in a speech he delivered in Bridgeport, Connecticut, on December 12, 1943.[1] Its fullest ideological expression was in his book, *Teheran, Our Path to War and Peace,* published just a few months later.[2] Browder's theories were a systematic set of revisionist concepts which promoted collaboration with and accommodation to, the imperialist ruling class. It led to a series of right opportunist policies which culminated in the liquidation of the Communist Party. Browder's theory departed from the time-tested principles of revolutionary class struggle basic to Marxism-Leninism. His views emphasized liberal, reformist forms of struggle and left the Party tailing after the bourgeoisie, eventually abandoning entirely the road to revolution.

Browder drew upon the Teheran agreement, a pact hammered out between Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin in December 1943, establishing unity among the allied powers in World War II and opening the second front. He transformed concepts of an international and diplomatic character, important in the war against fascist Germany, into a full-fledged domestic program.

Browder declared that a harmony of interests had been established between labor and capital. He called for a new "national unity" to bring full employment, peace and an end to periodic economic crises. He boasted that he was even willing to welcome J.P. Morgan into this grand coalition and "clasp his hand on that and join with him to realize it."[3] He promised that the communists "will not raise the issue of socialism in such a form and manner as to endanger or weaken that national unity," and assured the ruling class that his program was consistent with the fullest possible expansion of consumption by the wealthy and the accumulation of their private incomes.[4]

The starting point of his new "national unity" was to continue operating the American economy at full capacity—as during the war—by seeking foreign markets equal to the war market. He proposed giant industrial development corporations of government and business which would extend credit to and invest in "the devastated and underdeveloped areas of the world," thus creating "generations of peace and well-being in the world."[5]

Essential to Browder's line were the same elements that historically had lent themselves to right opportunism in America. These included: A) American exceptionalism, which saw capitalism in the United States as exempt from the Marxist laws of growth and decay which govern the capitalist world. Abandoning all class analysis of bourgeois democracy, Browder put forward the view that "Communism is twentieth century Americanism." B) Fundamental overestimation of the power and stability of American imperialism, which led to the conclusion that revolutionary struggle for socialism was impossible. C) Basic great nation chauvinism which opposed the oppressed and colonized peoples' struggles for liberation from the yoke of imperialism and instead portrayed the imperialist ruling class as the bearers of prosperity and democracy. D) The view that the United States would enter a period of class harmony—a long post war period of class peace during which time progress and prosperity could be achieved within the framework of the "free enterprise" system. E) Browder's belief that Blacks had achieved full equality through "peaceful" development of capitalism and abandonment of the right of self-determination. Browder believed that Black people had already exercised the historic right of self-determination and opted for integration into the country as a whole.[6]

The logical conclusion of Browder's principles was his contention that the Communist Party—a revolutionary vanguard party based on Marxist-Leninist principles—was no longer appropriate for American conditions. It should be replaced by a political association which worked for reforms within the prevailing two-party system of the United States. This is precisely what was done in May 1944, when the Party was dissolved and the Communist Political Association created in its place.

Browder's revisionist line had not developed overnight. His Teheran thesis was only the latest expression of a rightist trend that had been developing within the Party for several years. The origins of Browderism can be traced to his distortion of the united front policy of the Seventh Congress (1935) of the Communist International. This congress had called on communists to build broad united front movements of peoples, governments and parties to defeat fascism where it had come to power and to prevent its spread to other countries. But the congress had also explicitly warned against the danger of reducing the independent and revolutionary role of the communist parties within such fronts. Despite these warnings from the Communist International, the CPUSA slipped into serious right reformist distortions of the united front policy under Browder's leadership. Browder led the retreat from the principles of class struggle which affected all areas of the Party's mass work.

The Party's work in the Black liberation movement felt the first effects of this retreat. Scarcely a year after the Seventh Congress called on communists to strengthen their own ranks and maintain the initiative within the united front, the U.S. Party moved to liquidate a main revolutionary strongpoint of its work in the South, the militant and communist-led Sharecroppers Union.

In the years that had followed my visit to Alabama, the Sharecroppers Union had continued to grow. In 1936, it had a membership of roughly 10,000, spread over five counties in the Alabama Black Belt. It was growing throughout the lower South with 2,500 members in Mississippi, Georgia, Louisiana and North Carolina.[7] But in October 1936, the SCU was dissolved and its membership merged into the Agricultural Workers Union and the Farmers Union of Alabama.[8] This latter was an organization of predominantly white small farm owners and tenants based in the northern part of the state, outside the plantation area. This union was strongly influenced by the racist and right-wing Coughlinite forces.[9]

In retrospect, I believe that those responsible for liquidating the Sharecroppers Union were motivated by a sort of crude trade union economism, a desire to restrict the struggle of Black soil tillers to economic issues (as if this were possible) and a feeling that the existence of an independent and mainly Black union with the explosive potential of the Sharecroppers Union would frighten off our new democratic front allies: the Roosevelt New Dealers, the Southern moderates and the CIO leadership. As Camp Hill, Reeltown, and Dadeville amply demonstrated, even the smallest move to change the status quo could lead to armed conflict. In fact, any demand to give Blacks a voice in determining sharecropping conditions or wages was essentially revolutionary as it threatened the existing set-up. One could almost hear the opportunists sighing with relief upon the union's dissolution.

I recall in the late thirties listening to a garbled report by one of our agrarian specialists in which he tried to explain the reason for the move. The problem of Black soil tillers in the deep South was just a part of the general agricultural problem, a matter of getting Blacks and whites together against the common enemy. The Sharecroppers Union with its militant program mainly emphasizing Black grievances had become an obstacle to the unity of Black and white Southern farmers.

I took issue with this chauvinist position, pointing out that it contained a crass underestimation of the national character of the struggle of the Black peasantry in the South. I expressed surprise to hear, ten years after the adoption of our revolutionary line on the Afro-American question, what amounted to a reiteration of the old social democratic position which ignored the special position of Blacks in the name of unity. The problem of the Black peasantry in the South was not exactly the same as that of the poor white farmers in the South or in the rest of the country. It was a struggle against semi-slave conditions reinforced by racist barbarism, and in the long run, for the completion of the land revolution left in default by the betrayal of Reconstruction.

The Sharecroppers Union had represented a renewal of that struggle, a struggle that required special forms and methods of organization, and its own leadership. But by 1936, the union was dead and a grievous blow had been struck against the movement in the South. In the face of the fiercest repression, a sizable Party organization with an active YCL, ILD and remarkably high political development had been built in the Black Belt. When the Party backed down from the SCU, the whole Party structure began to atrophy. By the end of 1943, all the major Party concentrations in the South were formally dissolved and replaced by non-communist education and press associations.

Despite such backsliding, the Party entered the war period with a reputation as the leading fighter for equality and Black liberation. Yet as Browder's line developed, it continually pushed us into a position of tailing after Black reformist leadership. In the thirties, the Communist Party had often been looked upon as "the Party of the Negro people"; in the forties however, our line led to repeated betrayals of the struggle. For a broad assortment of Black reformists, it was just the opportunity they had been waiting for. Still smarting from defeat in the Scottsboro campaign, they jumped in to fill the tremendous void left by our retreat.

When A. Philip Randolph called for a dramatic march on Washington to protest discrimination, the Party leadership backed away from the issue and urged "unity" in the face of the fascist enemy. The Party declared that the march would create "confusion and dangerous moods in the ranks of the Negro people."[10] Black newspapers and the NAACP popularized a mass slogan of the "Double V" (Victory over Hitler abroad and Victory over Jim Crow at home), but the Party leadership rejected the slogan on the grounds that it detracted from the war effort!

Occasionally the Browder revisionists would give lip service opposition to discrimination and segregation in the armed forces. When it came down to a concrete situation, however, their support was considerably less vigorous. For example, four Black WACs at Fort Devens, Massachusetts, were court-martialed for protesting their commanding officer's demand that they should "do all the dirty work." Outraged churches, unions, newspapers and civil rights organizations quickly organized and forced the Army to reverse itself.

The Party leadership, however, reprimanded the WACs. Ben Davis stated, "The U.S. general staff has on many occasions... proved that they deserve the full confidence of the Negro people...we cannot temporarily stop the war until all questions of discrimination are ironed out."[11]

The slogan of the right of self-determination was officially dropped in 1944. But it was clear that the revolutionary line it symbolized had been suppressed for some years. James Ford explained the new perspectives for Black equality to the Party. He stated that the economic expansion which Teheran promised would "open up the South for unprecedented development that will raise the standard of living from the degradation and poverty which have held back the entire Southern people."

According to Ford, not only would reactionary Southern Congressmen be driven from office under such conditions, but "American democracy as a whole will be strengthened and the Negro people will be fully integrated into our American society. These advances will be irrevocably secured, providing the democratic, win-the-war forces, including the Negro people, stand solidly behind our Commander-in-Chief."[12]

The Party's work in the trade union movement also suffered from Browder's opportunist distortions of the united front.[13] In 1939, the Party dissolved its system of trade union fractions, factory nuclei and shop papers as a concession to the CIO's leadership, a move which seriously weakened the Party's strength in basic industry. This move also accentuated the tendency to hide the Party's face. In the UAW and TWUA (Textile Workers' Union of America), the Party retreated from situations where it had the support to elect one or more of its members to leadership and supported other candidates.

During World War II, the Party supported the no-strike pledge. While it was a generally correct policy for the situation, the Party refused to fight for reciprocal pledges from business to curb war-profiteering and ensure the workers' standard of living. Browder opposed any struggle to extract such agreements from business, viewing them as a disruption to war production. He attacked slogans like "equality of sacrifice"—which was being raised by some Party trade unionists—as stemming from narrow factional considerations. Thus, the Party found itself tailing behind the labor bureaucrats on the day-to-day issues of safety, speed-up and overtime pay for overtime work.

Browder's revisionist theories extended into the field of foreign policy, resulting in nothing less than his approval of American imperialism.[14] He argued that the peoples of Latin America should place their trust in the Roosevelt administration and the continuance of the "good neighbor policy." He urged the Chinese communists to "trust America" and in 1945 openly endorsed U.S. foreign policy as "pressing toward the unity and democratization of China."[15] Browder abandoned support for the struggles of the oppressed and colonized peoples, arguing that they should rely on the good intentions of the great nations to gain their liberation.

The ascendency of Browder's revisionism was based upon both objective and subjective factors within the Party. Objectively, bourgeois ideology had long penetrated the working class movement in the United States, had been nurtured during the reformist years of the Roosevelt era and had thrived in an atmosphere of inadequate Marxist-Leninist training of Party members and leaders.

The liquidation of shop units and trade union fractions greatly weakened the Party's base among the industrial workers and weakened the leading role of the proletariat within the Communist Party. Combined with a large influx of professionals and white collar workers, this greatly broadened the social base for revisionism in the Party. The situation was further aggravated by the leadership's ousting of some 4,000 Party members who were foreign born because of a desire to "Americanize" the Party. This chauvinist move turned away many of the most experienced and ideologically steeled U.S. communists from Party activities.

Finally, a distortion of democratic centralism developed inside the Party under Browder's leadership. Democratic discussion, collective leadership, criticism and self-criticism, and ideological struggle were abandoned. Browder consolidated an encrusted and entrenched bureaucratic machine under the direction of his chief lieutenant, Eugene Dennis. Democratic centralism gave way to, as V.J. Jerome later put it, "dictatorial centralism." Browder himself was glorified as the "greatest living American" and became increasingly infatuated with "contacting influential persons" while actually isolating himself from the working class.

By May of 1945, however, Browder's visions of an all-class post-war alliance were already beginning to clash with the harsh realities of everyday life. Even before the war ended, layoffs and strikes had occurred in a number of areas. Led by the U.S., the western allies made no secret of the fact that their main target in the post-war period would be the Soviet Union and the so-called "communist menace" it represented. Under such conditions, Duclos's letter had a sensational effect on the membership of the CPUSA.

Upon its publication in May of 1945, the rank and file were plunged into a series of discussions and debates. Discussion bulletins were written and distributed internally; clubs and whole sections engaged in heated struggle. It was an honest attack on bureaucracy and for many this was the first time they had experienced such open political struggle inside the Party.[16]

Opposition to Browder gained rapid support and soon resulted in the Emergency Reconstitution Convention which was held in July of 1945. At this convention, the Party was reformed and Browder's opportunism exposed.[17] Threatened by the growing rank and file revolt, the Party—and especially the leadership—were forced to make self-criticisms.

The convention was significant in that it reflected the two trends which were to mark the future history of the Party struggles against revisionism. On the one hand there was the rank and file—spurred to action by the Duclos letter and with at least a partial understanding of the seriousness of the Party's rightist errors—but as yet without any clearly defined leadership. On the other hand, there was the firmly entrenched Browderite leadership who saw their main task as the squashing of the rank-and-file upsurge and holding on to their positions at any cost. One day they spouted Browderism, the next day they were repudiating his line—with little genuine self-criticism in between. To me and many of my friends, such self-criticism seemed to be mere breast beating and verbal recantation.

It is no wonder, therefore, that there was much skepticism in the ranks as to the ability of the old leadership, particularly of Browder's ex-lieutenants like Eugene Dennis and John Williamson, to successfully wage a struggle against revisionism. The old leadership was carried over almost intact into the newly reconstituted Party.[18] But it was precisely these people who controlled the Party apparatus.

Their main preoccupation at this time was to short circuit the upsurge of the rank and file; to abort what was most needed at that time—a thorough, open ideological struggle, and a period of criticism and self-criticism which would be mainly directed against the right. Almost immediately after the convention, however, the new leadership began to shift the focus of the struggle away from right opportunism to the so-called left sectarian danger. Thus Browderism was exposed pragmatically (in specific manifestations like Teheran), but the revisionist line it represented was never repudiated in a fundamental way.

Along with this came a wholesale attack on the left which is best described by Harrison George, a former editor of the *Daily Worker* and *People's World* (the Party's west coast newspaper), in a document titled *The Crisis in the CPUSA*. Here George related the draconic measures that were taken against so-called Trotskyite and semi-Trotskyite elements in the Party, many of whom were self-proclaimed "premature anti-Browderites." As a left opposition grew in strength following the reconstitution of the Party, a number of cadres were expelled. Many were veterans, even charter members, who had laid their lives on the line for the Party. Such men as Vern Smith, veteran labor writer for the communist press, Bill Dunne, an experienced trade union cadre and at one time the Party's representative to the Profintern, as well as Harrison George himself, were expelled.

George states that these expulsions were followed by mass expulsions at the local level and the dropping of a number of dissidents. Many clubs were reorganized by national and district level leadership, some cadres were expelled with an "increasingly bureaucratic suppression of Party democracy, as membership opposition passed over from a passive to an active form."[19] Eventually all that remained of democratic centralism was centralism.

A later phase of this struggle began with the National Committee meeting of 1947. This period saw the leadership postpone the national convention and in so doing refuse to submit its policies and programs to the membership for renewal or rejection. The Fourteenth Party Convention was finally held in August of 1948. Undoubtedly the right felt the need for more time to consolidate its position. Such was the case in the period following the 1945 Convention when they postponed choosing the officers of the National Committee for a year.

PARTY CHAIRMAN WILLIAM Z. FOSTER

During this period, William Z. Foster rose as the unchallenged leader of the Party. In 1945 the rank and file looked to Foster, and Foster alone among the leadership, to reconstitute the Party on a truly revolutionary basis. The Party was at a crossroads and Foster's task was a historic one.

He had a proud history in the Party and the revolutionary working class movement. From his years in the IWW and the Socialist Party, he came into the CP with a wealth of experience in the trade union movement. Foster was a leader of the great steel strike of 1919 which saw some 365,000 workers walk off the job. In the twenties, he led the struggle against dual unionism and fought for a revolutionary program for work within the unions.

The development of the prestigious Trade Union Education League (TUEL) can be attributed to his leadership. As we have already mentioned, Foster made some rightist errors in this work. Slow to see the need for independent left-led unions, he later criticized these errors and came to lead the campaign for industrial unionism. He was one of the chief architects of the CIO.

But the task he was faced with in 1945, the fight against revisionism, proved to be beyond his capabilities. While Foster was the best of the old leadership, he was certainly no fearless warrior against the right. Even before he was thrust into the leading role in the Party, his pragmatism had come to the fore as he consistently put political expediency ahead of ideological struggle.

For example, he and Sam Darcy had been the only two members of the National Board to criticize Browder's line before the fateful arrival of the Duclos letter. In January 1944, he submitted a letter to the National Committee which criticized Browder's line. Duclos himself had liberally quoted Foster. But publication of the letter was suppressed by the National Committee.[20] Foster did nothing for fifteen long months, never fought for his line or fought to bring his case to the rank and file.

During the pre-Convention discussions of 1944—a period which, according to the Party Constitution, is supposed to be marked by the most open and frank discussions and scrutiny of the Party's line—Foster maintained his silence. He presided at the convention in May of 1944 which dissolved the Party and then went on to nominate Earl Browder for president of the new Communist Political Association—just four months after his letter criticizing Browder's line. In turn, Foster himself was nominated by Browder to serve as one of the association's vice-presidents. At this same convention, Foster chaired the committee which prepared the charges to expel Sam Darcy. Yet Darcy was expelled for espousing in a more active form the same criticism of Browder as Foster expressed in his January letter to the NC.[21]

From the beginning of the struggle against Browderism, Foster consistently underestimated the seriousness of the right danger. At the convention to reconstitute the Party, he cautioned against "overcorrecting" the Party's past errors, and, in this spirit, he swept the whole Browder crowd back into leadership on his coattails. Not only was Foster denying the lessons of the Party's most recent period, he actually overlooked the whole historic trend of the working class movement in the United States. From the Socialist Party to Lovestone to Browder, the main deviation had always been right opportunism.

For a long time, Foster seemed to think that he could be a buffer between the various factions and groupings in the Party without ever having to seriously confront the more rightist elements in the leadership. In reality, this centrist position led him to play a conciliationist role for the right. While paying lip service to the primacy of the right danger, he actually leveled most of his guns at the left. I assumed that his cold reception to me when I returned from the Pacific was because he associated me with the "disgruntled left sectarian" elements in the Party, some of whom, like Bill Dunne, were old friends of mine.

In his concluding remarks at the Fourteenth Convention of the CPUSA, Foster openly stated that rightism was the main danger facing the Party. But he never detailed exactly what the content of these right errors was. At the same time he informed the membership that "our Party has had to conduct a fight on two fronts" and that there were dangerous "Leftist moods" and "Leftist renegade grouplets" in the Party, that this could be seen in the revolts in a number of districts, including New York and California.[22] He was referring to areas where some of the strongest opposition to rightism developed and where many cadre and clubs were either expelled or dropped out.

It is clear that Foster considered the threat from the right to be in abeyance once Browder had been removed from leadership. He saw the political struggle—the fight to oust Browder—as being primary. In effect, he didn't understand the importance of fighting the ideological influence of Browderism which still had a firm grip on the Party.

What led Foster to so seriously underestimate the right danger and to tacitly accept the expulsion of so many genuine communists? It can be safely asserted that these errors were rooted in his own tendency towards rightism. Like Browder, he underestimated the leading role of the vanguard party. In his 1944 letter criticizing Browder's line there is no mention of the dissolution of the Party!

Foster wrote a postscript to this letter and the two were published in the July 1945 *Political Affairs.* In this postscript, Foster said that he had opposed the dissolution of the Party at a board meeting, but didn't actively pursue the matter because he thought it was a lost cause. He ends with these words: "So I left the whole question out of my letter to the National Committee. The immediate task, as I saw it, was for me to help to keep the C.P.A., in fact, if not in name, the Communist Party."[23] Foster obviously believed that the Party could continue to play a leading role even when it was liquidated organizationally.

Again, while Foster correctly criticized Browder for overestimating the progressive aspects of the monopoly capitalists, he himself overestimated the role played by FDR and the "liberal labor combination." In the same letter in which he criticized Browder, Foster writes,"We must understand clearly and definitely that the basic forces of a progressive national unity are those grouped, in the main, around Roosevelt's banners and we must fight to help them extend and solidify their ranks."[24]

Foster was indeed a product of the times—of a period in the Party's history when the attack on Marxist-Leninist theory, rightism and bureaucracy had seriously undermined the inner workings of the Party. In all fairness, it must be said that his ability to lead the Party was also greatly affected by his poor health. Following a heart attack in 1932, Foster's activities were seriously limited and he was forced to spend much of his time at home—removed from the operative leadership of the Party.

In the final analysis, however, it was his pragmatism—empirical and superficial methods of evaluating conditions in the Party and the country—which led him to agree with the main tenets of the right, most importantly the possibility of a peaceful transition to socialism. It was this view that "the struggle is everything, the final aim nothing," along with an unwillingness to rock the boat, which most consistently guided his actions.

His failure to fully break with the right opportunism of Browder, with revisionism, left the door open for the resurgence of a line which eventually liquidated the Communist Party as the revolutionary vanguard of the working class once and for all. His continued vacillation and conciliation to the right helped to lay the groundwork for the final victory of revisionism in the U.S. Party. It is a sad note that this outstanding leader of the American working class was in the last years of his life putting forward such revisionist theories as peaceful transition to socialism.

No one who lived through the years 1945 to 1948—with perhaps the exception of Harrison George or a very few others—had a full understanding of what was going on in the Party at the time. I know that I observed right errors, but I merely saw them as mistakes and tendencies which could be corrected, not as reflecting a whole line that would lead to liquidation of the Party.

I didn't really trust the leadership, especially Eugene Dennis (though I had little actual personal contact with the man). He seemed to me to be the kind of guy who could never make a direct statement. I knew that he had been Browder's right hand man and one of the leaders of the whole right deviation. Once all the breast-beating was over, he became general secretary of the Party, nominated by Foster. I wondered then how he had managed to weather the change so well.

When the struggle first began against Browder in the latter part of 1945, I was withdrawn—still reluctant to become involved in the inner-Party struggle. But I had seen an article by Claudia Jones, a young Black woman communist from the West Indies who had challenged Browder's line on the right of self-determination. The article had greatly stimulated my interest.[25] I knew that the ideological struggle inside the Party was far from over, and I thought that I could play a role in restoring our position on the Afro-American question. But I was still leery of plunging into the struggle because of the self doubts that hung over me after my battlefield experiences in Spain and my work in Baltimore. My heart attack also held me back somewhat, and Foster's brush-off had renewed some of the deep personal wounds that I felt.

I was therefore somewhat apprehensive when in December 1945, Charles Krumbein, my old Lenin School friend, and then district organizer for New York, called me into a meeting. When I arrived, I found in addition to Krumbein: Bob Minor, (I had always had warm feelings toward Bob which I thought were mutual, despite his close association with Browder); Steve Nelson, former brigade commissar in Spain; and James Ford, one of the few "casualties" from among the Browder leadership.

Charlie began the meeting by saying that they wanted to discuss my future work and resolve the Spanish problem once and for all. As I recall, he said that he did not believe the rumors that I had left the front without permission, and that Bob and Steve were in Spain and could substantiate this.

It seemed to him that the rumors had been irresponsible accusations directed at "one of our leading Negro comrades." "One can just look—although it certainly isn't necessary—at Harry's World War II seaman's record and see that the rumors were not true," he said.

He concluded by saying that he felt it was time for all disparaging rumors, none of which were ever made into direct charges, to cease. And that "Harry should be encouraged to make the kinds of contributions to the Party we all know he is capable of." Bob Minor said a few words along similar lines and Steve Nelson agreed. Only Ford expressed reservations but did not make any specific charges.

Bob suggested that a restatement and elaboration of a revolutionary position on the Afro-American question was urgently needed. It had been nearly ten years since such a presentation had been made.[26] I agreed. It seemed to me that there was every indication of a renewed upsurge among Blacks and important struggles were beginning to unfold which required a clear understanding of the question if the Party were to play a leading and decisive role. The rank and file, especially the young Black cadres, were aware of the crucial place the question held in the struggle to root out the influence of Browderism. For all of these reasons, I anxiously took up the task of writing such a book.

I felt at the time that Krumbein and Minor were surely not acting on their own, but rather as a committee of the Politburo set up to investigate the matter. Therefore, I considered this meeting as an official clearance of all accusations stemming from Spain, and felt free to concentrate all my efforts toward writing the book. For the next two years I spent the major portion of my time working on the manuscript and did a great deal of reading and research while I was still sailing. I had decided then to concentrate on developing an exhaustive examination of the agrarian situation in the South as a basis for the restatement of the correct position on the Afro-American question.

But in the meantime, I still had to earn a living. Belle had come in from Los Angeles and set up a small apartment on West 138th Street. She had gotten a job in a shoe factory and I decided to sign on another ship.

CUBA

In early March 1946, I signed on the motor ship the *Coastal Spartan,* bound for Havana, as a cook and baker. She was a small freighter of the same class as the *Turk's Knot*, the ship I had sailed on my last voyage in the Pacific.

This was my first trip to Cuba. When we docked in Havana, a young mulatto police sergeant who was in charge of the dock area came aboard. The chief cook, a Filipino, introduced me to him as Sergeant McClarran. This was not the cook's first trip to Havana, and he whispered to me that McClarran was a good fellow. "He looks after our people ashore," he confided. "And to show our appreciation we always make sure he gets a couple of pounds of butter, which costs a lot here."

The sergeant was a tall strapping fellow who spoke fluent colloquial English. He explained to me that he had spent two years in the United States at the Cuban Pavillion of the 1938 World's Fair. Curious, I asked how he got his name. "Oh, my old father was a Scotsman," he said, laughing.

On hearing that this was my first time in Havana, he offered to show me the city. We walked out of the harbor area and along the Prado, the main street. We sat down at a sidewalk cafe and ordered some food. While we were talking the sergeant rose and hailed a nattily dressed man with a military bearing.

He introduced me as a writer from the U.S. and we exchanged pleasantries. The man passed on and I asked who he was.

"Oh, last month he was chief of police. I don't know what he's doing now. I never liked him; he was a real reactionary, one of the hangovers from Machado's times."

A few minutes later, after we had left the cafe, the sergeant stopped to greet another man. When I asked who that was, he said, "Oh, that's our new chief of police."

The sergeant seemed to be a progressive fellow, and he had undoubtedly sized me up as a man of the left. As we walked, we proceeded to discuss the current political situation. The period just after the war was one of popular upsurge as the Cubans sought to realize the democratic aims they had fought for in World War II. Grau San Martín's people's front government was in power and the Popular Socialist Party (communist) inspired and led many struggles of the period. It was just prior to the reactionary offensive, sparked by the cold war, which swept Latin America.

I told the sergeant that I was a veteran of the Spanish Civil War and he insisted on taking me to a bar where some Cuban veterans hung out. As we entered I saw one familiar face, a beautiful Black woman whom I had met in Valencia. I had known her only slightly; she was actually in the company of the General El Campesino. The story was that she had played quite a role fighting in the trenches against the fascists.

Recognizing me at once, she exclaimed, "El Capitán!" We stood at the bar with the sergeant, who seemed to know everybody, and he translated when I needed it. I asked about other Cuban Spanish Civil War veterans. I had met a few, but I had forgotten their names. Most had transferred from the Fifteenth Brigade to Campesino's brigade after Jarama.

Out in the street again, I thanked the sergeant and asked if he could direct me to the Communist Party headquarters. Not only would he direct me, he said, but it would be an honor for him to escort me. We walked up a main boulevard along the bay and stopped to look at the statue of Antonio Maceo on horseback. Maceo had been a Black leader in the war of independence against Spain.

A few blocks further on we came to the headquarters of the Popular Socialist Party. It was located in what appeared to be an old mansion. We entered the door which opened into a large foyer. There were large stairways apparently leading up to offices on the second floor. But the stairs were blocked off by a barricade. Behind it were a few husky-looking young security guards. They seemed to know the sergeant who told them, "This is Comrade Haywood from the American Party. He wants to see Blas."

One of them picked up the phone and repeated the message. Finally, he turned and motioned us up the stairs. We went as directed and entered an open door where Blas Roca, the general secretary of the Party, was standing behind a desk. He shook my hand and also the sergeant's, whom he seemed to know. Roca was a light brown mulatto, as I recall, of short and stocky build.

"Sit down. Sit down," he said. He said that he had heard of me, and asked about James Ford, whom he knew. Ford had attended a congress of the Cuban Party as a fraternal delegate several years before. I told him that Ford had stuck too long with Browder and was not in the new leadership.

"Yes, we were also stuck with Browder, but we got unstuck before you comrades did," he said.[27]

He then asked about Foster. I told him what I honestly thought at the time, that Foster seemed to be all right and that under his leadership we were finally pulling out of the revisionist swamp.

We continued talking and he told me about the situation in Cuba, how the Party had come through the revisionist period more or less intact, and that they were now in an uneasy alliance with Grau San Martín. It was getting shaky, however, "We're under no illusions," Roca told me, "With the war ended we're expecting a reactionary offensive."

He also asked about our work among Blacks. I told him that despite the backsliding with Browder, the Party's prestige remained high among Blacks. "There's a debate going on now, and we're looking forward to restoring our position."

After we had talked for about an hour, I felt I had taken enough of his time, and rose to leave. "Be sure to give my greetings to

Foster," Roca said in closing.

The sergeant and I walked back to the docks to sightsee along the Prado and take in the night life of Havana. The ship pulled out the next day for Matanzas, the sugar port in Oriente Province where we loaded sugar for the States. The ship docked in Jersey City on April 2, 1946.

THE FIGHT FOR OUR REVOLUTIONARY LINE

On my return, I began hearing more and more about the attack on the left and rumors about old friends of mine who were under attack. From what I could see, all was not well with the Party nor was the rank and file satisfied with the course of the struggle against Browderism.

To me, the one bright spot in all this was the struggle to reaffirm our revolutionary position on the Black national question, for the Party to once again take up the fight for the right of self-determination in the Black Belt. I followed this whole question very closely and it was clear to me that the impetus came mainly from the Black cadres and particularly from the new blood that had come into the Party in the last decade.

At that time, Blacks made up fifteen percent of Party membership. Despite Browder's liquidationist policies, the Party still maintained its reputation as a leader in the struggle for Negro rights.[28] I felt that this was largely due to the outstanding reputation the Party had built for itself during the campaigns of the thirties—Scottsboro, the ILD, the Unemployed Councils—and its yeoman work in building the CIO and organizing the unorganized.

The Party maintained its fighting reputation through much of the war, despite the opportunist errors that were made. During the thirties and forties, this was the basis for the recruitment of large numbers of outstanding young Blacks who quickly matured as leaders at every level of the Party and the mass movements. This core of Black cadres was further strengthened by the return of Black veterans who were acutely aware of the gains made during the course of the war and of how these gains were now being threatened.

These cadres played a leading role in the working class struggle and their role in the Party's strong fight for seniority rights after the war was particularly important. The layoffs of the late forties had a harsh effect on Black workers, many of whom first entered industry during the war and were often the lowest in seniority. A spontaneous Black caucus movement arose in these years as the top leadership of both the AFL and the CIO steadfastly refused to take up the special demands of Black workers. In 1951, these caucuses united into a national organization, the National Negro Labor Councils.

Such struggles deeply affected the cadres and reflected the rising sense of struggle and militancy of Black people in general. I myself was very much aware of this new spirit.

When my ship first docked, I spent a lot of time walking the streets of Harlem. I was struck with the visible optimism on the faces of the people passing me in the street. Black people would no longer be cowed and bullied by Jim Crow. They had experienced a mass political awakening as a result of their wartime experiences and this was reflected in their manner.

The war served to break the historic isolation of the Afro-American people from the struggles of the peoples of the world. Black men and women served over a million strong in the armed forces and the wartime expansion of industry saw an unprecedented number of Blacks, close to a million workers, come into the U.S. labor force. Through such involvement, Black people were able to see more than ever that they had allies in the colonially oppressed people abroad and in the U.S. working class at home in their struggle against Jim Crow and monopoly capitalism.

Black people were deeply influenced by the colonial and semi-colonial upsurge of World War II as people in India, China, Indonesia, Africa, Latin America and the liberated countries of eastern Europe rose up to oppose fascist and imperialist domination. National minorities within the boundaries of the Soviet Union had been liberated by the socialist revolution and were now exercising one form or another of self government. More than ever, Afro-Americans were determined to fight for equality and full democratic rights at home. There could be no turning back, no return to the past.

During the course of the war, momentum had been building toward an upsurge in the Black liberation movement and it burst into full bloom once the war ended. There was a firm commitment by Blacks to carry on the fight against Hitler at home. The post-war period saw the largest strike wave in history and Black workers played a leading role in it. In militant strikes and actions led by the Negro Labor Councils, Black workers demanded jobs, upgrading and training into skilled jobs, along with greater representation in unions and in the leadership thereof. At the same time, they played a very important role in the liberation movement as renewed struggle developed against lynchings, frame-ups, police brutality and the general denial of equality and democratic rights.

As early as 1946, the Civil Rights Congress (CRC) was formed to replace the ILD which had largely been liquidated under Browder. The CRC was headed by my old friend William Patterson and in 1951, it submitted *We Charge Genocide,* a petition to the United Nations "For relief from the crime of the United States Government against the Negro people."

This formidable document, inspired by Patterson, recounts much of the terrorism of this period when lynchings and Klan activity were on the rise throughout the country and especially in the South. The frame-up in the case of a self-defense slaying and subsequent life sentence of Mrs. Rosalee Ingram and her sons in Georgia, the burning and destruction of the entire Black community of Columbia, Tennessee, and the frame-up on rape charges and execution of the Martinsville Seven are but a few examples.[29]

This spontaneous upsurge made it all the more pressing that the Party once again take up the fight for the right of self-determination. Without such a revolutionary program, the Party would never be able to play a leading role in the struggle or to unite Black and white workers.

Many veteran Black cadres played an important role at this time, but I especially remember the young people. For instance, as I have already mentioned. Claudia Jones's discussion article that kicked off a hugh debate in the summer of 1945, attacking Browder's ideological and political stand on the Black national question. Jones contended that Browder's line on self-determination was "based on a pious hope that the struggle for *full* economic, social and political equality for the Negro people would be 'legislated' and somehow brought into being through reforms from on top."[30] Jones upheld the revolutionary position as "a scientific principle that derives from an *objective* condition and upon this basis expresses the fundamental demands (land, equality, and freedom) of the oppressed Negro people."[31]

The debate began as an important phase of the struggle against Browder. It continued in the clubs, the sections and the districts for over a year. Almost every issue of the *PA* from the middle of 1945 through December 1946, carried an article relating to some aspect of the struggle. Under the cover of a ringing denunciation of Browderism, the right came forward to continue his liquidationist line on the Black national question and to oppose the right of self-determination. This time the banners were carried by two college professors—Doxey Wilkerson, a Black man and formerly a professor at Howard University, and Francis Franklin, a white professor from the University of Virginia.

While couched in sociological and theoretical jargon and with constant allusions to "new" developments in the Black Belt, their arguments were just another rehash of the assimilationist deviation on the question. While opposing the right of self-determination, both Franklin and Wilkerson discussed the growing trend toward integration and disintegration of the Black majority in the Black Belt, the breakup of the sharecropping system and semi-feudal relations of agriculture, to support their arguments.

Both tended to downplay the role of the national aspirations of Black people and to portray the direct integrationist trend as the only significant aspect of the movement. They totally negated the possibility of a national revolutionary upsurge, that the Black liberation struggle would ultimately take an autonomous direction towards political power as a guarantee for equality. Wilkerson and Franklin failed to understand that in the Black Belt this could mean nothing less than the right of self-determination, that is, the option of autonomy, federation or secession.

Franklin's analysis was different from earlier liquidators only in that he discovered a new dimension to the right of self-determination, "the right of amalgamation with the dominant nation." While the struggle for unity has always been implicit in the right of self-determination, Franklin had something else in mind. By calling for the "right to amalgamate," he was actually advocating the right to disperse, to disintegrate and blend into the rest of the country.

Max Weiss, a member of the National Committee and formerly a leader of the YCL, wrote a substantial article refuting Franklin's line. In it, he stated what he perceives as Franklin's meaning: "The right of self-determination means the right not to be a nation, the right to put an end to its existence as a nation."[32]

Rather than seeing it as a question of the masses of Black people fighting for the right to control their destinies, Franklin saw it as a struggle of the national bourgeoisie to control its own markets. In a sort of inverted Jim Crowism, Franklin argues that a Black nation can only develop under Jim Crow because that brings about the development of a separate Black capitalist class. "It is this separate Negro capitalism which has formed the economic base for the emergence among the Negro people of the Black Belt of separate national characteristics of their own."[33] Clearly, in Franklin's estimation, the system of Jim Crow was breaking down, and this was bringing about the elimination of the national bourgeoisie and, with it, the possibility of the development of a Black nation.

Wilkerson's line was slick, but even more bankrupt, as, based on a few token gains, he painted a blissful picture of the uninterrupted progress of Black people under imperialism. Wilkerson's perspective on the question is that the nation is new and embryonic and it is therefore possible for it to develop in any number of directions. In the case of the Black nation, it is going more and more in the direction of full integration with Black people becoming a national minority. Thus he states, "The perspective for the Negro people in the United States is neither toward disintegration as a people nor toward statehood as a nation; it is probably toward further development as a national minority, as a distinct and increasingly self-conscious community of Negro Americans."[34]

Wilkerson went so far as to state that the Black nation is too embryonic even to be conscious of its own nationhood. The implication from this being that if Black people don't demand self government, why should communists do it for them. In fact, there had been strong waves of nationalism in the Black liberation struggle—the Garvey movement, the Forty-ninth Staters and the Sufis were but a few examples. Wilkerson would have been astounded to hear of the number of subject nations that had even less developed national characteristics, but nevertheless were still afforded the right of self-determination by communists.

In the twenties a Yugoslavian communist, Semich, had raised similar arguments concerning the Croats and Slovenes in his own country. Stalin spoke to Semich's argument in a speech entitled, "Concerning the National Question in Yugoslavia."

> In 1912, when we Russian Marxists were outlining the first draft of the national programme no serious movement for independence yet existed in any of the border regions of the Russian Empire. Nevertheless, we deemed it necessary to include in our programme the point on the right of nations to self-determination, i.e., the right of every nationality to secede and exist as an independent state. Why? Because we based ourselves not only on what existed then, but also on what was developing and impending in the general system of international relations; that is, we took into account not only the present but also the future."[35]

Wilkerson's theories were refuted in two well documented and well formulated articles by James Allen.[36] To Wilkerson's claim that more and more Blacks were leaving the Black Belt, Allen countered that this has been an historic trend since the end of the Civil War. Nevertheless, the Black Belt was still an area of Black majority and still maintained the remnants of slavery in the sharecropping system. While Wilkerson contended that the right of self-determination can only mean secession, Allen correctly pointed out that federation and various forms of autonomy were also encompassed within the right of self-determination.

Linking the working class struggle with the Black liberation movement, Allen stated, "History has taught us, and our present political experiences teach us, that every forward step of the progressive movement, every advance toward the unity of white and Negro workers, and every democratic gain...makes self-determination of the Negro people more realizable."[37]

I had been doing a lot of study and writing at this time and saw that the Party needed to have a basic program for agrarian reform in the Black Belt; the kind of program that had been liquidated with the dissolution of the Sharecroppers Union. "Toward a Program of Agrarian Reforms for the Black Belt," a two-article series, was my contribution to developing such a program.[38] Later, much expanded and deepened in *Negro Liberation*, these articles re-examined the agrarian system in the South based on current data.

The essential thesis of the articles was that lying at the root of the oppression of Blacks is the unsolved agrarian question in the South. The Southern plantation system, with its deeply-rooted semi-feudal characteristics, is being forcibly maintained by the imperialist ruling class in alliance with the Southern oligarchy through the system of Jim Crow laws and lynch terror. It is, in fact, continually reproducing Black inequality in all walks of life, condemning Blacks to Jim Crow in the South and throughout the country. With a long range program of self government for the Black Belt, the articles also included such immediate demands as reduction of land rentals, written contracts between landlord and tenant, and abolition of all laws and practices supporting peonage.

The culmination of this intensive period of debate and struggle was the restoration of the revolutionary position on the Afro-American question. At a National Committee plenum in December 1946, the Party adopted a resolution which reaffirmed its support of self-determination for the Black Belt. This victory in great measure must be attributed to the militancy and determination of the younger comrades who played such an important role.

The Party's rededication to this revolutionary fight had particularly important consequences for work in the South, which had been most seriously affected by dropping the position. In 1947, two years after the Party was reconstituted in the South, membership was up to 2,000—higher than it had ever been. Cadres began playing a leading role in building the fight for equal rights and in the anti-lynching campaigns, in the trade unions and organizing the unorganized. Communists led two important strikes in North Carolina which saw some 17,000 tobacco workers come under union contract for the first time. Miranda Smith, a young Black woman and a member of the Southern Negro Youth Conference, was an outstanding and militant leader in the strike. Unfortunately, she died soon thereafter.[39]

A part of the brief upsurge of Party work in the South was the 1948 Progressive Party campaign in which communists were very active. Paul Robeson and Wallace made an unprecedented joint tour of seven Southern states—loudly refusing to obey the Jim Crow laws governing meeting, eating and sleeping places, and attacking white supremacy head on. The Wallace campaign in the South was in many ways a mass protest movement against segregation.

Party members also helped build the New Orleans Youth Conference, an organization of over 500 Black and white youth. It picketed New Orleans stores in protest of discrimination against Blacks and integrated busses and street cars in defiance of local laws. Eventually the NOYC merged with the Southern Negro Youth Conference.

In the spring and summer of 1948, I participated in two important meetings on the agrarian question. These meetings were valuable because they were part of the struggle to reconstitute the Party in the South. I was very enthusiastic about the first of these which was held in Atlanta, because I hadn't been in the South since the thirties. There was still harsh Jim Crow but there was something else afoot. Though I was only there a short time, I could see it on the streets—a part of the general post-war upsurge of Black people, but with its own special Southern character. Busses were still segregated, but Black people no longer waited until all the whites were on board before they themselves got on. This was a small step, but I knew it wouldn't stop there.

The meeting, which was attended mainly by Southern cadres, was to summarize some of the past mistakes and begin to draw up a program. It was at this meeting that I first learned in some detail of what had happened when the SCU had been liquidated.

Following this, there was another meeting in New York to discuss the agrarian question. At this meeting, I found the rightist tendency to lump the special oppression of Black sharecroppers and tenants in the South into the more general farm question was still prevalent. I remember that we held a very long discussion on this point and after considerable struggle, we were able to win the majority to the correct line.

Out of these meetings came general agreement with the need for a revolutionary program of agrarian reform in the South—based on the right of self-determination for the Black nation. As a result of these discussions, the Agrarian Commission developed such a program and it was published in *Political Affairs* in March of 1949.[40] Unfortunately this program was never put into practice, nor did it ever take on any organizational form.

In general, this victory in the field of Afro-American work was to be only short lived as the right opportunist trend hovered forebodingly in the wings. The main political thrust of the leadership at the time was to build a coalition with the forces arrayed around the Truman Administration. This was merely a continuation of the rightist united front policies of the Browder period and had important implications for the Party's work.

Faced with such a strong movement among the rank and file, however, the Party leadership was forced to accept reaffirmation of the revolutionary line. I strongly suspect that their intentions from the beginning were to subvert that line.

This is evident in Dennis' remarks at the December 1946 Plenum of the National Committee. "I think we would make a serious and harmful mistake if we were to associate the realization of the right of self-determination solely with the realization of socialism in the United States," he stated. And further:

> If the American people, the labor movement in alliance with the great Negro people and all progressive and democratic forces, can check and defeat the onslaught of pro-fascist monopoly reaction, and bring into power, as an important phase of that struggle, a progressive presidential ticket and Congress in 1948, with all that this would entail, many things will be possible, including, at least, tremendous strides toward the full realization of equal rights of the Negro people in the Black Belt.[41]

This statement clearly cuts away at the revolutionary heart of the right of self-determination and puts it in the context of a program of electoral reform. It was a crude attempt to make the slogan acceptable to the liberal and reformist leaders the Party saw as its allies. It is an utter denigration of the slogan, reducing it to a reformist character and fostering the illusion that such profound changes in the lives of the Black masses can occur without mass revolutionary struggle against monopoly capitalism.

Dennis's position had sounded a little off to me from the start. I felt all along that he had never agreed with the slogan, and certainly I had never heard him defend it before. In the same speech, he seemed to be hedging on the question. It appears to me now in looking back that it was some form of apology for the period of backsliding and vacillation under Browder.

In a manner that could easily be used by the right to justify dropping the principle of self-determination, Dennis referred to past sectarianism in application of the slogan, as though this had been widespread.[42] It's true that there had been some sectarianism when the position was first adopted in 1928 and then again in the early thirties when we had little practical experience.

There were those who tried to decide in advance what the final solution would be for Black people; for instance, Pepper's demand for a Negro Soviet Republic. But these "left" sectarian errors had never been the main deviations in our work. It seemed to me that Dennis was again trying to raise a straw man on the left to avoid dealing with the main danger of right opportunism.

The Party leadership had already undertaken the liquidation of left-led centers in the mass movement, and soon after the plenum the once influential National Negro Congress was dissolved. The leadership contended that Black comrades should move into the "mainstream of Negro life" (as best represented by the NAACP) and not become isolated in so-called sectarian organizations like the NNC.[43]

That this was not the view of the majority of cadres was dramatically illustrated to me a couple of years later at an enlarged meeting of the National Negro Commission in New York. This meeting was attended by thirty or forty of the Party's top cadres—mostly Black—in the field of Afro-American work.

I remember that I made a speech questioning the liquidation of the NNC and calling for the formation of a left-led united front organization to take its place. Paul Robeson, a great human being and an ardent fighter for Black liberation, had just returned from Europe and was at the height of his popularity.[44] I reasoned that we might take advantage of Robeson's acclaim by asking him to head such an organization and to build a broad, mass based movement.

Betty Gannett and Pettis Perry, representing the leadership at the meeting, spoke vigorously against this proposal, saying that it was sectarian and that there was no need for another organization among Black people. I had expected such a response from them, but I was surprised by the overwhelming support my proposal received from the cadres, especially the young Blacks. They spoke so forcefully in support of my proposals that Gannett and Perry had to retreat, saying that they certainly would bring the mattter before the national leadership. I don't know whether or not they did, but this was the last time I ever heard anything about it.

Despite the important gains made in the field, the rightist tendency remained very persistent. It expressed itself mainly in the form of the "coalition concept" and affected not only the work among Blacks, but all areas of mass work, the trade unions in particular.

This policy was actually an extension of Browder's liquidationist line which was never thoroughly rejected by the new leadership and left the Party tailing the liberal and reformist leaders.

The political basis for such a concept could not be found in the harsh realities of the cold war and the attack on communism worldwide, but only in the minds and hearts, and the most wishful thinking of those who propounded it. The 1945 Reconstitution Resolution states, "The Truman Administration, like the Roosevelt government from which it is developing, continues to receive the support of the Roosevelt-labor-democratic coalition, and responds to various class pressures."[45] Not only does this reflect the Party's classic overestimation of the Roosevelt forces in particular, but also a failure to understand the role of such forces as representatives of the imperialist class as a whole.

Underlying this outlook was the "failure to recognize the realignment of class forces, especially the sharp swing to the right on the part of the top leadership of the CIO and labor generally," as well as the old line reformist leadership of the NAACP.[46] While the Party remained spellbound by this line, seemingly oblivious to the world around it, anti-communist resolutions were passed in the trade unions. So called progressive-center labor leaders like Walter Reuther and Phillip Murray bolted with lightning speed to the side of the imperialists. The NAACP leaders involved themselves in a vicious red-baiting campaign, as the government began gearing up the machinery for full enforcement of the Smith Act.[47] All such measures were fully backed by the courts, the police, federal agents and all levels of government.

CLASS STRUGGLE IN THE NMU

I could see the obvious effects of this policy in the National Maritime Union (NMU). The cold war realignment of forces was bringing on a crisis of the left in the trade union movement—a clear employer-government drive against communists, a drive to break up the left-center coalition.

While this shift had already begun before the war ended, it was clear that they really meant business at the 1946 CIO Convention in Atlantic City, when the CIO Declaration of Policy on Communism was passed. The statement held that the convention delegates "resent and reject efforts of the Communist Party or other political parties and their adherents to interfere in the affairs of the CIO."[48]

This move signaled the first round in the post-war attack on the wages and living standards of the working class and was a clear victory for the monopoly capitalists. In fact, there was no organized opposition to the right wing block which was led by social democrats, Trotskyites, Christian Fronters and Coughlinites. The CP delegates also voted for the resolution, while the Party press took an "it could have been a lot worse" kind of stand. This left the masses of delegates a confused and easy prey to the demagogy of the right wing.

Thus sacrificing democratic rights for "unity," and an independent stand for coalition at any price, the Party suffered blow after blow at the hands of the Reuthers, Murrays and Currans. When in 1948 it had become clear that the trade union bureaucrats were unalterably lined up against the left, the Party halfheartedly tried to shift gears—calling for a rank-and-file upsurge in support of the communists. But this move was unsuccessful in that the Party refused—even in the face of vicious reaction—to fully break with its policy of tailing the bureaucrats, leaving large sections of the rank and file to become consolidated behind the right-wing leadership of the unions. The Party refused to play the bold independent role that was necessary if we were to exert any kind of leadership in the labor movement.

The NMU was a crucial arena of this struggle. Built by the Communist Party, it was the most left and democratic of all the unions. Communists were in the majority on the National Board. NMU ships were a school for ideological and political struggle—not only around the day-to-day issues on the ship, but on the broader political questions as well. Communism, Trotskyism, Stalin and the Black national question were regular topics of mass ideological debate. NMU seamen had served proudly in the Spanish Civil War.

The NMU had a reputation as the finest, most progressive and democratic union in the country. Ships crewed by the union were the first in the maritime industry to have checkerboard (Black and white) crews. Jesse Gray, a Black seaman and friend of mine who began sailing when he was sixteen or seventeen years old, described the general feeling that Blacks had about the union at that time.

"One thing that was really exciting...you had to have been in the NMU to really feel, it was like another world. It's like going to China, to the Soviet Union on a trip if you've never been there. If you've always lived in the South in the U.S. where racism was so sharp, and to go to the NMU where Blacks and whites were on the ship, they were together, worked together—it was a real big thing. And that was only as a result of the sharp struggles of the more advanced political forces."[49] As to the role of Black workers, Jesse said, "Black workers in particular gave leadership to the NMU, and arose then as a tremendous, conscious force—Black workers and their allies were the most powerful bloc on the waterfront."[50]

One would have thought that we communists were so strong that we could never have been driven out of the union. We built it, we fought for it, but we reckoned without our host. They had a plan which had been developed over a number of years and which included the use of government training schools to develop cadres of seamen. This was an organized attempt to create a split among members in the union with payoffs to right wingers and union thugs. While the Party vacillated and refused to take a stand against such chicanery, the shipowners and the government scored victory after victory. And NMU President Joseph Curran was their man.

Curran had been a leader of the union since its founding days in 1936 as a militant split off of the bureaucratic and corrupt Seaman's International Union (SIU). A rough and tumble sailor whose home ashore had once been Battery Park, Curran had experienced a rapid shift in fortunes since the founding of the union. He had once been a militant fighter and before the break up of the left-center coalition had been counted among the left in the union. The Party was very slow to understand what was happening and to change its strategy accordingly when Curran began shifting to the right in late 1945 and 1946.

I noticed this changed atmosphere as soon as I got back on ship in the fall of 1946. We were sailing on the USS *Washington.* She had been a troop ship during the war and had been reconverted by her owner, United States Lines, to her old status as trans-Atlantic passenger liner. She traveled the New York-Southampton-Le Havre route, sometimes stopping at Cobh, Ireland, in County Cork. It was a sixteen or seventeen day voyage and I stayed with it off and on for a year, while I was writing my book.

She was a big old ship, damp and drafty, with a crew of about 700. Conditions in general were poor and seamen were always being injured. Accommodations in the crews' quarters, the glory hole, were unbearable. Under such conditions there was quite naturally a good bit of struggle on board. And here is where we clearly saw the new alignment of forces—it was the rank and file against the Curranites all the way.

Curran's men would faithfully tail the company's line. At that time the ship owners had a major campaign to put all their ships under foreign flags in order to enjoy cheap wages and get rid of the union. This necessitated temporarily shutting down a number of ships which sailed under U.S. flags. When the company would threaten to take the *Washington* to the ships' graveyard up the Hudson River, the Curran forces would say that we should withdraw all pending grievances or face the loss of 700 jobs. "Save jobs at all costs," they said. We of course oposed this line; as long as we had jobs, we would fight for our rights.

Curran had a willing and ready accomplice in the Trotskyite Socialist Workers Party. The *Washington* crew in 1947 represented for the first time a large concentration of Trotskyites and they were clearly out to get the Party. They thought if they could tail behind Curran, even get a few places on the Curran slate, they could help in wiping communists out of the industry and emerge as the sole, unchallenged, left wing leadership. The second half of their plan was never to come to fruition, but they certainly served the cause of Curran and the ship owners well.

Instead of joining us on the basic issues, they firmly took up the collaborationist policies of the Curranites in opposing strikes and other such actions in order to save jobs. They became Curran's goons. When the Coast Guard screened all the communists out of the industry, the Trots were saved—partially in payment for their meritorious service to the government and partially because they represented no threat to the Curran leadership.

But the progressive, communist-led left was very strong on that ship. We controlled the stewards' department—400 men, about two-thirds of whom were Black and Puerto Rican—and also had strong forces on deck and in the engine room. The right couldn't openly oppose us so they had to resort to more underhanded tactics. Often they would use guys like Frank Ryan to try and infiltrate our ranks. An able-bodied seaman and a very capable bastard, he had been around the trade union movement for quite a while and had been port agent in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Ryan was elected ship's chairman for one voyage of the *Washington.* Later he became a lieutenant of New York City Transit Union boss, Mike Quill. As far as the right was concerned, he was a flaming radical; but when it came down to brass tacks, he was just another Curran man in disguise. He caused a lot of trouble, but he never fooled us.

Jesse Gray, who was then about twenty-one years old, was chairman of the steward's department and, on one or two voyages, had been elected ship chairman. He was a militant organizer and a great strike leader as I recall. Many years later Jesse and I reminisced about all the many strikes we had on ship. "We had all the workers joining us and we could tie the ship up in a minute—nail it to the pier," he said.

I recall one occasion when the crew went straight to the union hall—right up to the national board to present their grievances. Curran was there and, as could be expected, opposed the strike. After a lot of militant anti-Curran rhetoric, the board nevertheless went along with him and voted against the strike. I remember Jesse talking to the crew after that, he sure didn't want to go along with the board. But the majority voted to accept their decision and everybody went back to work.

The NMU held a convention in October 1947 at the Manhattan Casino. It was a Curran sweep both locally and nationally, accomplished with the able bodied support of the local police and Curran's own henchmen and thugs in the union. He would carry his men from port to port, just to vote in and help "supervise" local elections.

A friend of mine tells a story about a seaman meeting a shipmate of his in New Orleans. “I thought you were just in New York the other day. How did you get down here so fast?” he asked.

“I caught a fast freighter,” was the terse reply.

Despite this offensive, the left slate which was headed by Blackie Myers and Ferdinand Smith, a Black man, won 15,000 out of 60,000 votes nationally.[51]

I was at the national convention and remember that there were a couple of dozen police scattered around the hall where the voting took place. Paddy wagons waited expectantly on the outside. A police lieutenant would from time to time take the microphone and warn the crowd against creating disturbances, as brawls between the Curranites and the rank and file broke out all over the room. Curran was at his demagogic, red-baiting best, foretelling the dire consequences of a communist takeover of the union. He warned that the ship owners would never bargain with the reds.

With this election, union democracy was thrown out the window. The constitution was rewritten with the bureaucrats now firmly in charge of what had once been the most democratic union in the country. The Coast Guard began backing up the attack on the left by issuing passes. It became mandatory for merchant marines to carry Coast Guard passes and none were being issued to militants. By the late forties, communists were effectively barred from shipping out of any port in the country.

THE 14TH PARTY CONVENTION

I stopped sailing on the *Washington* in March 1948, to devote full time to writing the book. This was made possible by Paul Robeson. I had met him through Bill Patterson, the two were close friends and Bill had helped bring Robeson into the left progressive movement.

Many tributes have been written about Paul and I knew them all to be true. He was a great musician, singer and actor. But more importantly, I knew him to be a great human being and an ardent fighter for Black rights. We had often discussed the book I was working on. Robeson was sympathetic to what I was doing and anxious to see the book, the first of its kind by a Black Marxist, in print. When Bill explained it would be possible to finish the manuscript in a few months if I could work full time on it, Paul was more than willing to subsidize me, offering a hundred dollars a month.

During the next few months I worked hard on the manuscript. I was very fortunate to have a good editor who was of invaluable help to me and a very capable political consultant as well. The encouragement of my wife Belle and other friends was also most important and helpful to me. At the same time, I was teaching classes on the Afro-American question at the Jefferson School and Party training schools in the district. I found these tasks complemented each other nicely. In the classes I was able to use material I was working on for the book. The lively discussions provided useful criticisms and the questions helped to clarify my ideas and formulations.

In the fall of 1948 my book, *Negro Liberation,* was published.[52] It received great acclaim in the communist press, both here and abroad, and was published in a number of languages: Russian, Polish, German, Czech and Hungarian. It came to be regarded by the Party as a basic text in its field. Meetings and seminars were set up which discussed the book. Shortly after its publication, I spoke at mass meetings in Detroit, Ann Arbor and Chicago.

The position of the book was not new, but a reaffirmation of the revolutionary position developed at the Sixth Comintern Congress in 1928. The heart of this position is that the problem is fundamentally a question of an oppressed nation with full rights of self-determination. It emphasized the revolutionary essence of the struggle for Black equality arising from the fact that the special oppression of Blacks is a main prop of the system of imperialist domination over the entire working class and the masses of exploited American people. Therefore the struggle for Black liberation is a component part of the struggle for proletarian revolution. It is the historic task of the working class movement, as it advances on the road to socialism, to solve the problem of land and freedom of the Black masses.

What was new in the book was the thorough analysis of the concrete conditions of Black people in the post-war period. I made extensive use of population data; the 1940 census, the 1947 Plantation Count and other sources, in order to show that the present day conditions affirmed the essential correctness of the position we had formulated years before.

I was very happy when the book was finally finished and in print. I felt that combined with the positive ideological struggle on the question which resulted in the 1946 resolution, the book laid a solid foundation for the Party's future work in the field. I felt that as future crises developed and the oppression of the masses intensified, the Black movement for equality and freedom would take a nationalist direction towards a struggle for political power and some form of self-government. For this reason, a program based on the principle of self-determination is an essential weapon in welding together the powerful revolutionary alliance of the Black masses and the working class movement.

Just prior to the publication of *Negro Liberation,* the Party's Fourteenth Convention was held in New York City. The convention took place in the midst of a growing reactionary offensive. It was a period of mounting cold war, Taft-Hartley anti-labor legislation, loyalty oaths and direct measures to illegalize and destroy the Party. At the same time, every effort was being made to discredit and wipe out all progressive traces of New Deal legislation.

The sharp swing to the right had just recently resulted in the expulsions of the left from the CIO unions, a crushing defeat for the communists. At the same time, top leadership sections of the Black reformists were shifting to support for Truman's anti-communist campaign and imperialist designs as embodied in the Truman Doctrine (early 1947) and the Marshall Plan (June 1947).

And if clearer indication of the growing attack on the left generally and the communists in particular were needed, the Justice Department provided it with the indictments of almost the entire Party leadership. In July 1948, the entire National Board was indicted on violations of the Smith Act.[53]

This was the setting for the Fourteenth Party Convention held August 2-6, 1948, in New York. With the reactionary offensive intensifying, the Party clearly needed to make a sober and accurate assessment of its strengths, of its base of support and its ability to rally the masses (especially workers and oppressed nationalities) against the ruling class attack. Rather than do this, the Party leadership sank further into the illusions of the "grand coalition" which had so dominated their policies since the reconstitution of the Party in 1945.

There were of course a great deal of militant sounding phrases to cover the retreat. Rhetoric about being "the party of socialism," [54] building a "fighting Communist Party"[55] and deepening "our theoretical understanding of the role of the Party," [56] was common in the speeches and reports. But underlying all of it was the fundamental rightist orientation that placed a premium on being in the "mainstream" of the people's coalition.

This was clearly seen in the grandiose assessment of the Wallace campaign. Wallace was not seen as representing the advocates of free enterprise, non-monopoly capital, nor was it understood that his campaign was the tail end of the wartime progressive coalition, the last breath of the dying liberal reformist movement. Rather, the convention's draft resolution portrayed the Wallace Party as a powerful movement on the verge of launching a sweeping attack on the monopolists' reactionary war-mongering policies. "The formation of this new party...marks the beginning of the end of the two-party system through which Big Business has so long ruled....it represents a permanent structural force in American politics."[57]

This obviously rightist assessment is furthered by Dennis's characterization of the Progressive Party as having a strong working class base of support. "The new Progressive Party, is becoming a mass people's party, and already embraces the most active and politically conscious sections of the new labor and people's coalition."[58]

In work among Blacks, the Party was still in the vise grip of the "coalition concept." Despite the fact that most of the leadership of the NAACP had swung behind Truman's anti-communist demagogy and launched a vicious red-baiting campaign, the Party pursued a policy of conciliation to the reformists.

In practice this meant the liquidation of any left-led organizations. Speaking at the convention, Ben Davis criticized "left" errors which were "reflected...in the failure to give main attention to aiding and supporting the NAACP. This organization is the largest, most authoritative, and most representative among the Negro people. It must be assisted and built."[59]

No better example of the Party leadership's inability to accurately assess its strength can be seen than Foster's concluding remarks in his discussion of the upcoming struggle to prevent conviction of the Party's indicted leadership. "There are tremendous powers arrayed against us—the Government, the press, the trade-union bureaucratic leadership, the Republican Party, the Democratic Party, the courts, and all the rest of the machinery of capitalism. But we have one great force on our side—the great masses of American people."[60]

Why was the Party so divorced from reality—so unable to accurately assess its position and strength in the working class and oppressed masses and make the necessary steps to defend itself? To do this would have required a sharp break from the rightist and tailist policies which had eroded the Party's base and influence. It would require a thorough-going self-criticism and struggle to break the grips of the rightism which had been carried over from Browder and still remained strong in the new leadership.

This the Party's leadership was unable to do for they were themselves the architects of the policy. They had short circuited the emerging rank-and-file struggle against Browder and had led the attack which brought the expulsion of the so-called disgruntled left guilty of nothing more than attempting to complete the struggle against Browder. And now they were just as fervent in their refusal to re-evaluate post-war policies.

Foster led the way by declaring that it was "utterly false" to say that at the 1945 Emergency Convention, the Party had not carried through the struggle against Browder. He arrived at a centrist solution, attributing such a view to "leftist renegade grouplets." He steadfastly declared that "events since then have proved the correctness of the course we then took" and that any weaknesses stemmed from "failures and shortcomings in carrying out a fundamentally correct line."[61]

Thus the 1948 convention set the stage for another inner-Party crisis. The upcoming trials would provide the opportunity for expression of a full theoretical rationale—that of peaceful transition to socialism—for these basically liquidationist policies, and leave the Party in the depths of a crisis from which it would never recover.

Chapter 21

A Party Weakened from Within

By the morning after the November 1948 election, the Party's house of cards was already beginning to collapse. In a surprise upset over Republican Thomas E. Dewey, Truman was re-elected president, with Henry Wallace receiving a scant million votes. The illusions most Party leaders had held of launching a third party on firm foundations of farm-labor support were smashed, reflecting our gross overestimation of the whole Progressive Party movement. I and many of my friends wondered then what would happen to the leadership's designs for the grand coalition.

It was in an atmosphere of increasing isolation and a rising red scare that the Party prepared for the trial of the eleven indicted leaders which began in January 1949. Since the end of the war, the government had been winding up the machinery for a full scale attack on the left. The Smith Act, which had been passed in 1940, was now being fully enforced.

Knowing full well that the Party still had strong roots among the masses, the cold war offensive became U.S. imperialism's response to the growing trend of world revolution. Imperialism emerged from World War II in a greatly weakened position, as the Eastern European countries joined the socialist camp and popular movements swept the developing countries. "The popular forces of revolution were on the march in all countries without exception, Asia, Africa, Latin America and the West Indies," said R. Palme Dutt.[1] The breach in the structure of world imperialism was widened by the emergence of socialist countries in eastern Europe.

But most important, from the standpoint of its effect on colonial people, was the victory of the Chinese Revolution. The success of the national and socialist revolutions in China extended the world's socialist sector to one-third of humanity, transforming the balance of world forces in favor of the camp of socialism and national liberation, giving sweeping impetus to the anti-imperialist revolution. It was through this widening breach that the revolutionary movements of the third world surged toward political independence and the establishment of new sovereign states.

Objectively speaking, these developments could have greatly strengthened our position in the fight against the government's anti-communist offensive. The Party should have boldly opposed this assault and done broad propaganda and agitation on the source of these attacks. Instead, the right-wingers chose the defeatist policy of furthering our retreat from the masses.

Personally, I often found myself being trailed by FBI agents. I couldn't get a job and found it difficult renting a place to live without the FBI intervening. I remember my wife threatening to call the health inspector on one of our slum landlords.

"Mrs. Hall," he said slyly, "I care about the health inspectors about as much as your husband cares about the FBI."

Scores of communists and activists in the labor movement, the Black movement and various anti-fascist committees were arrested, indicted or brought before Congressional and Senate committees to testify.[2] It was the era of deportations, the Taft-Hartley anti-labor law, the loyalty oath and blacklists.[3] Gerhart Eisler, a German who had been a Comintern rep to the U.S. in the thirties and a good friend of mine, was arrested and deported as a "master spy."

A group of ten Hollywood producers, directors and writers were blacklisted for their supposed communist leanings and served jail sentences for refusing to testify before HUAC. Eugene Dennis was convicted of contempt of Congress in June 1947 for refusing to testify. Bill Patterson was charged with contempt of Congress after being called a "nigger son-of-a-bitch" in a Senate hearing and shouting "You're another son-of-a-bitch!" in response.

Pat and I were good friends at the time and also did some political work together. One day in the summer of 1948, he called me up on the phone. "Come on over here, Harry, there's somebody I'd like you to meet."

I went around the corner to the building where he lived and walked up to the apartment. Sitting there was Haywood Patterson, one of the few remaining Scottsboro frame-up victims who had not been paroled. He had just escaped from Kilby Prison. I recognized him right away because he looked like his mother, whom I had met in Chattanooga. He was a handsome young man—about thirty-three at the time, well built and above average in height—but his most outstanding feature was his big luminous eyes.

Patterson told us the harrowing story of his prison escape and about his experiences while in prison. As we sat there talking, somebody, I don't remember who, got the idea that it would be a good thing to get young Patterson's story down on paper. Pat then suggested that we call Earl Conrad.

I thought this was a fine idea. I knew Conrad and thought a lot of his work. As a young white man, he had done a good bit of writing about the Black liberation struggle, even written for some Black newspapers, and enjoyed wide respect among the masses.

Conrad came over to the apartment and immediately agreed to work on the book. He took Haywood with him to his apartment and, in two weeks, they wrote the story of *Scottsboro Boy.*

Haywood Patterson later went to Detroit to stay with his sister. The Civil Rights Congress initiated a campaign to stop his extradition, and Michigan's Governor G. Mennen (Soapy) Williams refused to sign the extradition papers, saying that the man could not get a fair trial in Alabama. Unfortunately, Haywood Patterson was soon after convicted of a murder resulting from a barroom brawl. He was to remain in prison until he died in 1959.

In January 1949, I was looking for a way to make some money and thought about sailing again. I wondered whether I would still be able to get on a ship, since communists were being screened by the Coast Guard. But I was lucky. They didn't seem to know me and I was able to get a Coast Guard pass. I signed on my old wartime ship, the Moore-McCormack liner *Uruguay,* for a thirty-eight day cruise to Buenos Aires as a waiter. It was my last voyage as an NMU seaman.

As far as the crew was concerned, it was a different ball game. The Curranites were firmly entrenched by this time and dominated the ship. It was the first time I had sailed under such conditions and only knew a few old shipmates who hadn't yet been screened out. Congressman Bob LaFollette, Jr., a progressive of the Henry Wallace type, was a passenger on that cruise and was invited to speak to us. I guess it was a sign of the times that a man of such liberal reputation delivered as vicious an all-out attack on reds as he did on that occasion.

I pretty much kept to myself on the trip. It was a pleasant though uneventful voyage, the first time I had been in South America. We stopped in Trinidad, curved out around the coast of Brazil to Bahia, a city rich in the early history and culture of the Africans brought over as slaves. Then on to Rio de Janeiro, Santos (the port of Sao Paolo), Montevideo, and finally Buenos Aires.

On returning to New York, I was assigned to do research for the defense in the trial of the eleven communist leaders. I was glad to get the assignment, glad to be doing some Party work for a change. My job was to help Benjamin Davis and Robert Thompson in preparation for their depositions and to anticipate questions that might be asked by the prosecution. We worked closely with their attorney, Harry Sacher, a very energetic and bright guy.

Like the other defendants, Thompson and Davis were charged under the Smith Act with conspiring to organize the CPUSA, "a society, group, and assembly of persons who teach and advocate the overthrow and destruction of the Government of the United States of America by forces and violence, and knowingly and willfully to advocate the overthrow and destruction of the Government of the United States by force and violence."[4] The other major charge was that of liquidating the CPA and conspiring to reorganize the CPUSA.

Bob Thompson was a war hero who had fought in Spain and in New Guinea during World War II, where he won the Distinguished

Service Cross. At the time of his indictment, he was one of Foster's protégés and was secretary of the New York District. He was eventually sentenced to three years and, while in jail, was beaten severely by a fascist thug. He never fully recovered from the head wound he received as a result.

Ben Davis was by that time a member of the New York City Council and the leading Black in the Party. He was a long-time acquaintance of mine, as I have already mentioned, and we had developed considerable political differences over the years. I was nevertheless pleased to be working on his defense.

It was at this time that I met George Crockett, a young and very idealistic Black attorney from Detroit. (Today he is a judge in that city.) I think some of his illusions about bourgeois democracy were lost at this trial. He was once moved to tears of amazement at one of the more crude and arbitrary rulings of Judge Medina. Crockett spent thirty days in jail for contempt, along with the other attorneys in the case: Sacher, Abraham Isserman, Louis McCabe and Richard Gladstein.

The trial, which was held at the Federal Courthouse in Foley Square in New York, lasted nine months. From the start, it was clearly not a trial, but an inquisition of the Communist Party. The press willingly colluded with the government attack and the outcome of the case was a foregone conclusion. Presiding at this mockery of justice was the eminent jurist, millionaire and landlord—Judge Harold Medina. I went to the courtroom every day and sat through the interminable, boring sessions. I saw the viciousness and red-baiting of Medina and the prosecutor, Francis McGohey, first hand, as well as the unseemly array of stool pigeons the government had mustered to its side. Much has been said and written about this trial, and I will not go into much more detail here.

It was significant in that it was here that the theory of peaceful transition to socialism was first put forward as Party policy.[5] The defense had two choices in terms of a legal strategy for this trial. An offensive strategy would have meant proclaiming the right to advocate revolution, to stand firmly on the First Amendment, to make the courtroom a tribune of the people as Dimitrov had done when the Nazis charged him with burning the Reichstag in 1933. A defensive line would have meant trying to prove that the defendants didn't do what they were charged with and would involve a lengthy explanation of the history of the communist movement worldwide.

There was some struggle over these two lines, but it was the defensive strategy which was in the main adopted. Foster's deposition served as one of the Party's main lines of defense. In it he outlines a course of the workers' struggle for socialism via a people's front government, the perspective for achieving socialism in the U.S. along constitutional and peaceful channels.

Foster elaborated some on this point a year and a half later:

> The establishment of a people's democracy in the United States would signify that the coalition of workers and their allies had won a decisive political victory over monopoly capital and that a government had come into power, committed to the abolition of capitalism and the establishment of socialism. Such a government...might evolve either from a people's front coalition government through an internal regrouping of forces, or it might be elected by the masses of the American people after the people's front government had served its...function. In either event the working class and its allies...would carry through their democratic program, curbing all violent and illegal efforts of monopolist reaction to defeat it and set up a fascist state.[6]

Foster obviously saw the development of this theory not just as a defensive legal strategy, but as a political line. He was later to describe it as, "the most important theoretical advance ever made by the CPUSA on its own initiative."[7]

On October 14, 1949, the eleven were convicted. All received five year sentences, except Thompson whose sentence was reduced because of his wartime record. The case was appealed all the way to the Supreme Court, where the convictions were upheld. They started serving their sentences on July 2, 1951, with the exception of Thompson, Hall, Winston and Green, all of whom went underground.[8] They too were eventually captured or turned themselves in and served some time behind bars.

Released from my assignment on the defense team, I again started looking around for a way to support myself. I would have liked to continue as a seaman, but that was impossible since it was only a matter of time before the Coast Guard would catch up with my record. Some friends suggested that I write a sequel to my book, which had been translated in all of the European socialist countries with the exception of Yugoslavia. If I got to China, I was sure it would be published there. Writers' unions in the various countries would undoubtedly sponsor lectures for me and ask me to write articles.

The more I thought of the idea, the more I liked it. I discussed it with Belle and she was enthusiastic, agreeing to come along as my secretary. All we needed now was an OK from the Party. I raised the matter in the Negro Commission, which was at that time headed by Pettis Perry. The project was approved and we were given a green light to raise funds.

Everything went along fine. A few fund raising parties were given—one by Paul Robeson. Some affluent individuals were also solicited. Dashiell Hammett contributed a thousand dollars and said that he would be satisfied if I wrote another book as good as the first. In a few weeks, several thousand dollars had been raised and Belle and I booked passage on the French liner *DeGrasse.*

A couple of days before sailing, I stopped in at the *Daily Worker* office to pick up a press card. To my profound surprise, the editor, Johnny Gates, refused to give me one. This was all the more astounding in view of the fact that Gates himself had sent a letter accompanying my application for a passport, supporting my claim that one of the purposes for my going abroad was to write a series of articles for the *Daily Worker.* When I asked Gates why he refused, he mumbled something about not giving press cards out to everybody.

Stunned and speechless, I went upstairs to the national office where I saw Henry Winston, national organizational secretary. At that time I thought a lot of Winston. He had given me much needed support in overcoming the opposition of sundry bureaucrats and white chauvinists to publishing my book.

I told him what had happened. "What goes on here?" I asked. "Anybody can get a *Daily Worker* card. Why am I refused one on the day of my departure?"

Winston looked perturbed. He went back into the office, I presumed either to call Gates or to consult with other members of the Secretariat. He came back with an embarrassed expression on his face and said, "We can't do anything about it now." (Evidently it was Gates's decision, and the Secretariat felt they could not overrule him at the time.) He then said, "What's a *Daily Worker* card, Harry, you really don't need one."

"At least it would be some kind of credential," I replied. At the time I only had a press card from the *California Eagle*, a progressive Black newspaper in Los Angeles which was published by Mrs. Charlotta Bass, and a letter from the Council on African Affairs.

Winston went back into the office again and upon returning he asked, "Harry, weren't you a friend of Bill Dunne?" (Dunne was among those who had been expelled as a "left sectarian.")

I was astounded. "Sure. So a lot of people were friends of Dunne. William Foster was also a friend of his. Is that a reason for denying me a press card?"

He told me that I had been seen shaking hands with him recently.

"That's a lie," I said. Then I remembered. Some members of the staff of the Jefferson School had given a reception for me on the occasion of the publishing of my book. While speaking, I noticed Bill Dunne in the audience. As I stepped down from the platform, he rushed forward to shake my hand. Knowing it would put me on the spot in front of a lot of people, I turned my back on him. Later, I felt very bad about it too.

I told Winston all of this and then asked if there were someone accusing me of a political association with Dunne. He evaded all my questions and said that the matter could not be settled then.

"Go ahead, Harry, get on the ship." We shook hands and I left the office.

I called up James Ford, who, since his fall from leadership, had become much friendlier to the left. I told him what had happened. He said that "they" were trying to keep me from going. I didn't know who "they" were, but I certainly knew that I had enemies in the Party.

PARIS

We sailed at noon the next day, and a number of friends saw us off. Someone asked, "What are you looking so gloomy about? You should be happy."

"I am," I lied. We were leaving under a cloud and I had a gnawing premonition that there were storms ahead. We were depressed during the voyage across despite the fact that our fellow passengers included Lena Horne, her husband, Lenny Hayton, Chico Hamilton and his band, and Kenneth Spencer, the well known basso. All were friends of the left.

It was April 1950, and our spirits rose at the sight of Paris in the spring. We put up at a small hotel on the Rue Montmartre and immediately set out to contact friends and people who would be of help to us in our project. Our most important contact in Paris was an old friend, Bill Gebert.

Bill was Polish. He had been secretary of the Illinois District of the Party and lived half his life in the United States, but he had not succeeded in getting citizenship. He had been among the group of foreign comrades who had been rounded up and deported a couple of years before. Returning to Poland, he was assigned to trade union work and had become a representative to the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) and a member of its secretariat located in Paris. We were delighted to see each other. After giving him the low down on the situation in the U.S., I told him about my project and asked if he could be of help.

He immediately picked up the phone and called the Polish Ambassador, who invited all three of us to dinner at the Polish Embassy the next evening. We met the ambassador, the well-known Polish poet, Jerzy Tutrament, who after hearing about my project suggested that we make Poland our jump-off place. We were fortunate, he said, for a world writers' conference was to be held in Warsaw that summer.

It would be easy for him to arrange for me and my wife to attend it as guests of the Polish Writers' Union. We could then stay in Poland while making contacts and arrangements for a visit to other socialist countries. He said that he would take the matter up immediately with the proper authorities and assured us there would be no difficulty. He asked us to come around to the Polish Consulate during the next few days and apply for visas. He would personally see that they were put through.

What a relief! At last we were on our way.

It was at this time that we were introduced to Blackman, a West African poet and then editor of the English edition of the World Peace Movement magazine, which was published in Paris. He knew William Patterson and Paul Robeson, and later proved to be one of the best friends we had in Paris.

We met Gabriel Marie D'Arboussier, a representative from the Ivory Coast, who was then vice-president of the French Union, a member of the Chamber of Deputies and general secretary of the African Democratic Rally, a liberation movement embracing the former French colonies of West Africa. It was through him that I met a number of black deputies and senators, including Félix Houphouet-Boigny, president of the rally. Although a millionaire and owner of a large plantation, he was then considered a progressive. (Today he is president of the Ivory Coast Republic and quite conservative.)

Then there was a young Frenchman named Hervé, who was the editor of *Action* magazine, a progressive Parisian journal. He interviewed D'Arboussier, Belle and myself for his paper. We had a very cordial discussion of the similarities and differences between the struggles of the colonially oppressed people in Africa and Black people in the U.S. Stimulated by this discussion, I wrote an article on the condition of Blacks in the U.S. for the paper of the anti-colonialist youth movement at the Sorbonne.

One of my most memorable experiences in Paris was the Bastille Day Parade of July 14, 1950. Tens of thousands of people gathered to march through the working class districts of Paris. Communist Party leaders like Maurice Thorez and Jacques Duclos shared the speakers' platform with Black deputies, senators and other dignitaries from the former French colonies with whom they had, through the post-war years, developed a close relationship.

Belle and I were in the parade and it was a very exciting and invigorating experience for us both. The Korean War had just broken out and I remember the militant chants of "La Corée aux Coréens (Korea for the Koreans)." We saw thousands of Algerians lining up in the side streets and preparing to join the march.

In Paris we were never bored. Our new friends took us everywhere. D'Arboussier took us to his home in the country. We also visited Houphouet-Boigny at his chateau about thirty kilometers from Paris. We met a number of African senators and deputies, and D'Arboussier was organizing a banquet in my honor.

By this time, however, we began to worry about our project. It was drawing near the date of the Writers' Conference in Warsaw, and even some American delegates began passing through Paris on their way to the conference. For instance, we heard that Joe North, a well-known communist writer, was in town on his way to Warsaw. Others, like Mrs. Bass, were going to the World Peace Conference in Prague. Still we had received no word from the Polish Embassy. We had called there several times, and we were told that the visas had not come through yet.

Bill Gebert was out of town on a long tour of Asia and North Africa for the WFTU, so we had no way of finding out what was behind all the delay. We had been in Paris almost three months now and to add to our anxiety, we were pretty sure that we were being followed. When the conference convened in Warsaw, we knew very definitely that something was wrong. Then we realized that we hadn't seen D'Arboussier or Blackman in days.

While sitting in our hotel room one night in deep depression, there was a knock at the door and a good friend of ours, an African (whose name I won't mention in this context), entered. He was frowning and we knew it was bad news. "What's up?" I asked.

"I've got some bad news for you," he said. He then proceeded to tell us that a few days earlier he had been called in to see a representative of the Central Committee of the French Party and had been told that they had it from reliable sources that Harry Haywood was a spy of the U.S. State Department.

Our friend said that he had been horrified by the news and insisted that it could not possibly be true. "I told him that I had known you only in Paris, but that you had come with letters of introduction from Paul Robeson, William Patterson and others. Since then I had received letters from other friends, verifying your credentials and asking me to do everything to expedite your project. So I told him," he continued, "that they were making a horrible mistake. But the representative of the Central Committee insisted that their sources were reliable, that they had the information from their security people. Furthermore, it did not originate from here, but from over there (in the U.S.)."

He told me further that the French Central Committee had sent word out to all progressive organizations in Paris, warning them about me and requesting that I be barred from all of their offices as an enemy agent. "He then warned me, under pain of disciplinary action, to sever my relationship with you and under no circumstances was I to inform you of these charges. I thought about this a few days and finally decided to violate their discipline because I was sure that they were wrong. It was terribly unfair to you and your wife not to have told you about it."

We sat there stunned. Finally our friend asked, "Harry, do you have any bonafides besides the letters from the Council on African Affairs? Haven't you got anything from the Party itself?"

I admitted I had nothing.

Then he said, "You had better get in touch with them as quick as possible." He rose and said, "I wish you good people the best of luck. I'm sure that things will turn out all right. And that we will meet under more pleasant circumstances." He embraced us and left.

Now, it had become clear why we had not received our Polish visa; why D'Arboussier and other friends had stopped coming around; why we were being tailed, probably both by the U.S. Embassy and the French Communist Party; and why I had heard no more about the affair being planned for me by the African Democratic Rally. We were now completely isolated.

We went immediately to the Grand Hotel on the Boulevard des Capucines, across from the Opera House, where I telephoned Patterson in New York. I told him of our predicament and asked him to relay the message immediately to the Secretariat. He was of course astounded and promised he would do so first thing in the morning. He told us to keep our spirits up and that I would hear from someone in a few days.

That night I had my first ulcer attack. The next morning, I called the WFTU to see if Gebert had returned. Fortunately, he had and we took a cab to his office. As I told him the story, he kept shaking his head and muttering, "Unbelievable." Finally, after I had finished, he said, "I had heard things were not so good back there, but I didn't think they were that bad." He then told us that Tutrament had been assigned a new job as president of the Polish Writers' Union and that there was now a new ambassador.

He then picked up the phone and called the Polish Embassy to find out what had happened to our applications for visas. Listening intently for a moment or two, he put down the receiver, then shook his head and said, "They say, Harry, that they did not find it possible to give you a visa at this time. That's all they would say." It was now apparent to me that the word had been spread throughout the international communist community that I was a spy. But by that time I had become quite immune to shock.

Several days later, I received a letter from Patterson in which he stated that he had brought the matter before the Secretariat. They were all profoundly shocked and all disclaimed any knowledge of the source of the spy charge, denying that it came from there. He said that they were taking the matter up and that I should stand by to hear from Winston in a couple of days.

The letter from Winston arrived, expressing his regrets and those of the other leading comrades over the unfortunate turn of events which had prevented me from proceeding with my project. He assured me that they all had the fullest confidence in my integrity and were profoundly shocked by the charges. He went on further to explain that during the war, communication lines with other parties had been broken. They had not yet been fully restored and perhaps that was the source of all this confusion. He suggested that we return to the States while they straightened the matter out and then start over again, this time under the auspices of the Party, with the proper credentials.

It was August and we ran into the rush of Americans returning home when we tried to book passage. The only thing available was first class passage on a ship, sailing from Antwerp, Belgium, in about two weeks. Winston wired me $600 for fare and expenses.

With time on our hands and anxious to get out of Paris, we went to Amsterdam to visit Otto and Hermie Huiswood. After serving as head of the International Negro Trade Union Committee in Hamburg, Germany, and being forced to flee from one country after another in the face of the fascist advance of the thirties, Huiswood returned to the U.S. just before the fall of France. With U.S. entry into the war, however, he returned to his native Dutch Guyana where he was soon thrown into a concentration camp by the Dutch. When he was released after the war, the U.S. government refused to let him back into the country. Huiswood and his wife then decided to settle in Holland where he was recognized as a citizen.

COLD WAR

Finally we boarded the ship at Antwerp for an uneventful passage home. We were met at the dock in New York by Maude White and her husband, Arthur Katz. Immediately upon landing, I got in touch with the national office. I was told that a meeting of the Secretariat had been arranged for the next morning.

Arriving at the national office, I was met by my old friend, Claude Lightfoot, whom the leadership had brought in from Chicago especially for the occasion. "Now Harry, hold your temper, keep cool," he pleaded with me. "Just keep cool and we'll work things out." Nearly the whole of the Politburo was present for the meeting, including Hall, Stachel, Winston, Perry and Davis.

I was very angry and demanded that something be done. "After all," I said, "the French said it came from here." No one in the leadership appeared to have any knowledge of where the rumors had originated. After considerable discussion, the meeting came to a very unsatisfactory conclusion. While it was generally agreed that I should return to Paris with proper Party credentials, nothing to my knowledge was ever done to get at the source of the security breach.

A few days later I went to see Louis Burnham, a young Black friend of mine who had been enthusiastic about my project and had helped to sponsor and promote it. Lou was then editor of *Freedom*, Paul Robeson's paper, and he greeted me warmly. "What the hell happened over there?" he asked, and I ran down the whole story for him.

He said he had heard about the charges against me at a meeting of the staff. "We were dumbfounded." He named the staff members, all of whom I knew. Then with a thoughtful look he said, "One guy said, 'I am not surprised to hear that about Harry.' "

"Who was that guy?" I interrupted.

Lou suddenly clammed up and refused to tell me.

I pleaded with him, but he only said, "Ah, it doesn't matter, Harry. It occurred in a staff meeting, and I can't go around circulating stories about what happened in staff meetings."

I left Lou and walked down 125th Street, wondering who my accuser was. I never found out and never went back to Paris.

On returning from Paris in the fall of 1950, I could see that the Party was in a state of panic and hysteria, retreating in the face of the government's attack on the Party and the left. The McCarran Act had just been passed, making communism a foreign conspiracy and communists foreign agents. Described by many as a blueprint for fascism, the act called for the registration of communists and laid the basis for deportation and prosecution under the Smith Act of thousands of Party members.

In September 1949, I had been among a crowd of 15,000 at a peace rally in Peekskill, New York, when a gang of fascist thugs attacked the crowd just as Paul Robeson was on stage singing. In late 1951, eighty-three year old W.E.B. DuBois was tried on a charge of espionage for his sponsorship of the World Peace Appeal, a petition against the war in Korea. The government accused a quiet young Jewish couple from the Lower East Side, Ethel and Julius Rosenberg, of being master atom spies. They were arrested in July 1950 and executed three years later, despite a massive international defense campaign on their behalf. Following the jailing of the Party leaders in 1951, secondary Party leaders were indicted in a number of states. These included Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, Claudia Jones, Pettis Perry, Betty Gannett, Al Lannon, Oleta O'Connor Yates and Steve Nelson.

Years of illusions about bourgeois democracy had left the Party virtually unprepared for this governmental assault. Our Party had clearly never expected such a development and had not built an effective secret apparatus.

When we did make a feeble attempt to set up some sort of underground in the early fifties, its main purpose was not to continue the work under changed conditions, but to hide the Party, to weather the storm, so to speak. This period of repression, which would normally have been anticipated and planned for by communists, came as a surprise to our leadership.

Their immediate response was to greatly overestimate the attack. Party offices and sections were closed down, mass work cut back and membership consciously allowed to drop off. The Politburo dissolved the Southern region of the Party.

This approach only served to increase the hysterical atmosphere in the Party, as well as taking a concrete step toward its organizational liquidation. I went to see Henry Winston at the national office the day before he was scheduled to begin serving his sentence, but no one was there except Ben Davis.

I asked him what he thought I could do to help the Party, but decided not to take his advice when he said, "Aw, just go out and lose yourself."

Thousands of other Party members, however, were actually directed to go out and start new lives for themselves, to have no contact with the Party, to do no political work. Many were never heard from again.

While the top leadership was in jail, Pettis Perry and Betty Gannett became the administrative committee of the Party, a sort of caretaker leadership. They made day-to-day policy decisions and provided the main link with the underground section of the leadership. Foster remained as Party chairman, but his health kept him mostly confined to his apartment in the Bronx.

Gannett and Perry actively fostered such liquidationist moves. While many comrades feared to re-register, the Party also deliberately lost contact with hundreds of its members. There are some high level Party functionaries who believe that a secret decision was made by the National Board at this time to drop one-third of the membership in order to make the Party a smaller, more manageable cadre organization.[9]

Whether or not this actually took place, it is in effect what happened. In 1956, Foster evaluated the period of the cold war and characterized the "approach taken to security" as "the worst error of the whole Cold War period. It did our Party great injury in losses of members and mass contacts," he wrote.[10] Foster incorrectly characterized this error as "leftism," instead of seeing it as part of the whole rightward retreat of the Party. Police and FBI infiltration reached new heights in this period.

THE PARTY'S PHONY WAR

Things weren't easy for Belle and myself at this time either. We were still broke, unemployed and unemployable. I was working with the Party's Education Department and teaching some classes, as well as working with William Patterson on *We Charge Genocide.* But none of this paid any money.

It seemed that the FBI was always about one step behind me. When I did get a job, usually as a waiter, I would be fired a few days later for some inexplicable reason. Eventually a friend helped me get into Local Six of the Hotel and Restaurant Workers Union, and I was then able to hold down some jobs with a measure of security.

Against this background of panic, hard times and police infiltration and harassment, the Party continued its march to the right. Inevitably our revolutionary line and program on the Afro-American question was left to fall by the way. Concomitantly, white chauvinist attitudes and practices were once more on the rise. What was needed was a reaffirmation of our revolutionary line and an intensive campaign of education, in combination with mass work. The leadership responded instead with what I would characterize as the "phony war against white chauvinism."

Rather than coming out wholeheartedly in support of our revolutionary position, a kind of moral crusade was launched which was completely divorced from any mass work. Refusing to examine the full implications of Black oppression as national oppression, it was assumed that chauvinist practices could be eliminated by wiping out wrong ideas and attitudes of the Party rank and file. White chauvinism came to be considered as a sort of phenomenon; a thing in itself, separate from the fight for Black rights and proletarian revolution.

In the end, white chauvinism was strengthened as a result of this "phony war." In discussing the period, I cannot overemphasize the effects of FBI and police infiltration, provocation and incitement and their consistently and consciously disruptive activities. I am sure that agents were involved from start to finish on both sides of the fence, although none were actually exposed through the campaign.

The struggle began with an article in the June 1949 *Political Affairs* which was written by Pettis Perry, newly appointed head of the National Negro Commission.[11] Perry pointed to numerous manifestations of white chauvinism which undoubtedly the Party had to overcome in order to play a leading role in the rising civil rights struggles of the time. But Perry was not capable of giving correct leadership to this struggle since he shared the general rightist orientation of the National Committee. In fact, all this activity on his part it seemed to me was a cover for our failure to boldly take up or initiate mass struggle in the Black movement, leaving us to tail the NAACP.

From the start, the struggle emphasized administrative solutions (expulsions, penalties and removing people from leadership) in a complete distortion of proper communist methods of criticism and self-criticism. The purpose of criticism is to strengthen the Party, to consolidate the cadres behind the correct line and practice through exposing errors and rectifying them in practice. When Yokinen, the Finnish communist from Harlem, was found guilty of white chauvinism in 1931, his program for rectification involved playing a leading role in the movement for Black rights. Yokinen did this, fully vindicating himself in the eyes of the Party and the Black masses.

No such actions were taken in the "phony war." Instead, inquisitorial type hearings and committees were set up—veteran cadres raked over the coals (often with little or no cause), censured, and many expelled. A view developed which contended that the Party could not move forward, that mass work had to wait, until all vestiges of white chauvinism were driven from the ranks. This view was thoroughly idealist and contradicted the experiences of the socialist countries, where the struggle against great nation chauvinism goes on even in the period of socialist development.

This purist approach led the fight to take on a sort of intramural character in which success was measured not by the organization of mass struggles in defense of Black rights, but in the number of comrades against whom disciplinary action was taken.

It was an atmosphere which was conducive to the development of a particularly paternalistic and patronizing form of white chauvinism, as well as to a rise in petty bourgeois narrow nationalism among Blacks. The growth of the nationalist side of this distortion was directly linked to the breakdown of the basic division of labor among communists in relation to the national question. This division of labor, long ago established in our Party and the international communist movement, places main responsibility for combating white chauvinism on the white comrades, with Blacks having main responsibility for combating narrow nationalist deviations.

When Pettis Perry came forward as the "chief prosecutor" of white chauvinists, this division of tasks, so essential to building firm unity of the races, was clearly violated. On the one hand it allowed the leading white comrades to abdicate their responsibilities in fighting chauvinism and rallying white workers in defense of Black rights; while on the other, it left Perry and other leading Blacks as the "defenders" of Blacks against white chauvinists. The dangers of narrow nationalism were ignored.

The view developed that any act by a white person which any Black resented was, ipso facto, white chauvinism. Such an analysis was of course completely devoid of class content. In the final analysis, it was used to attack our revolutionary line on the Black national question which was always based on the fight for international solidarity of the working class.

Both tendencies, racist paternalism and narrow nationalism, merged in a line of capitulation to the imperialist ruling class. The common denominator of both, their theoretical foundation, rested in the treatment of peoples comprising an oppressed nation as a socially undifferentiated mass. All Blacks, regardless of their class, were considered revolutionary.

At the time, I wrote about the character white supremacy took on, saying, "In this case, the capitulation of white comrades to Negro nationalism is in itself an expression of white chauvinism, reflecting a hangover of bourgeois liberal, paternalistic attitudes. Of all forms of white chauvinism," I wrote, "patronization is the most subtle, insidious, and perhaps most pernicious type, because it parades under the banner of 'concern' for the Negro (sometimes hiding a real desertion of the struggle for Negro rights). *It is a form which tolerates, coddles, encourages, and panders to Negro bourgeois nationalism as it retreats before it.*"[12]

A double standard existed whereby white comrades might criticize other whites, but not Black comrades. A white making a criticism of a Black comrade for narrow nationalism was usually branded a chauvinist. This denied Blacks the benefit of criticism and self-criticism. I remember how such patronization thoroughly angered many of our working class Black cadres.

As the struggle wore on, and it lasted a good four years, it assumed a more and more vicious character. I have no doubt that the FBI considered it a job well done. White comrades began to fear visiting Black comrades, afraid they might do or say something that could be considered white chauvinist. The war was even carried into the realm of semantics. Comrades who used expressions like "black coffee" or "black sheep" were liable to be charged with chauvinism.[13]

I was at the wedding of a mixed couple when someone, whom I and others strongly suspected of being an agent, led a walkout in protest of the wedding cake. The bride and groom at the top were both white. Earl Conrad was a very close friend of the Party.[14] In 1950, he wrote *Rock Bottom*, the story of a Black woman in the Florida Everglades, where Blacks lived under very primitive and slave-like conditions.[15] Somehow this book, which was based on actual interviews, was construed to be degrading to Black people, and Conrad was heavily censured by the Party for white chauvinism. There were countless other incidents like these.

The whole thing really struck home when Belle was accused of white chauvinism in early 1953. She had been working as a manager at the Jefferson School lunchroom. One day a young Black man returned to the counter where she was serving and stated that she had given him twenty-five cents too much change. Belle thanked him and asked how she had made the error since she didn't want to repeat it. The young man opened his hand with change still in it and Belle pointed with her index finger, noting that she had given him too many quarters. Later that afternoon, the young man came back and told her he resented her act.

"What act?" she asked.

"The act of white chauvinism when you went into my hand."

Belle explained that she had only meant to check herself and certainly intended no insult. The student refused to be mollified by this and insisted that it was white chauvinism.

Belle refused to accept this view and they debated a few minutes, when suddenly he asked, "Who is your husband?"

"What does my husband have to do with this?" she asked, refusing to answer his question.

"You're a white chauvinist, like all the rest of white Americans," he shouted and left the cafeteria.

Belle reported the incident to Doxey Wilkerson who was on the staff of the school. At the time, he agreed with her that no act of white chauvinism was involved. He explained to Belle that there was a tendency to distort the struggle against white chauvinism among some of the younger students. About a month later, however, a committee was set up to investigate the matter and found Belle guilty of seventeen separate acts of white chauvinism stemming from the incident, and of developing an entire white chauvinist line.

It was to be eight months before she was cleared of these charges and even then the leadership tried to cover up the political questions in order to "establish peace." Involved in the accusations that were brought against Belle were not only the school staff, but representatives of the state leadership as well. All exhorted her to accept the view of the student, since her refusal only "compounded" the errors of white chauvinism.

The student later admitted that he had asked about her husband because he believed that "most women who marry Negro men are more chauvinistic than others." Not a word of criticism of the student was raised with regards to this slander. In fact, his position was openly supported by a Black woman on the school staff and by the state representative.

The attack on my wife was unmistakably directed at me as well. If Belle were a white chauvinist, then what must her Black husband be? Surely the most base, groveling conciliator of white chauvinism. The incident clearly served the interest of the rising reformist trend in the Party.

Such situations were fertile ground for the enemy, whose infiltrations were stepped up both within and without the Party. I'd often find two characters from the FBI waiting for me at my doorstep, and they would follow me down to the subway station a few blocks away at 103rd Street and Central Park West.

"Hey Harry, how long are you going to stand for what they're doing to you and your wife?" they would ask.

"Look what they did to you in California, and in Spain! Why don't you get next to yourself, man, and cooperate with us? We don't want you to take the stand."

I would walk along, paying them no mind, until we reached the station entrance. It was early morning rush hour and hundreds of people, including many progressives and CP members who knew me, were entering the station.

The agents would follow me right up to the rail and then holler, "Thank you for your cooperation, Mr. Haywood. Thank you very much."

The idea of this kind of harassment was obviously to break down my defenses and add yet another recruit to their roster of informants and stool pigeons. I got to know this pair quite well, as they were my regular tails for several months.

In the meantime, I became more and more concerned with the Party's so-called war on white chauvinism. The whole method and atmosphere surrounding Belle's case, the persecution of a devoted working class cadre, smacked to me of the most crass form of opportunism and stool pigeonry. During all the meetings concerning the matter, there was no attempt to get at the substance of the charges, only to convince Belle that she was guilty. It amounted to no more than political bullying and a bureaucratic stifling of all criticism.

I prepared a document in protest of the frame-up and presented it at a meeting where the charges were finally dropped. In the paper, I discussed not only Belle's case, but the broader implications such distortions had for the unity of Black and white students at the school and in the Party as a whole. I was convinced that something more had to be done about the situation and went to talk about it with Foster at his apartment in the Bronx. He and Belle were old friends from the miners' struggles in Kentucky and Pennsylvania. He was concerned about her case, as well as the general situation in the Party. He told me that the Party in Denver had been virtually liquidated through just such distortions. I showed him the document I had prepared and he invited me to attend a meeting of the National Board to discuss the matter.

When the topic came up on the agenda, Pettis Perry began his usual ritual recounting of yet another incident of white chauvinism. But I took the wind out of his sails when I pointed to the many distortions in this struggle. "Yes," I said, "there is white chauvinism in the Party, but it has combined with petty bourgeois nationalism and we must wage a fight on both fronts."

I was very angry when Foster cut me off. True, the Party had to stop this campaign, it had gone too far, he said. There were too many excesses. But there was no danger of petty bourgeois nationalism. What was involved here, according to Foster, was that old perennial Party menace, "left sectarianism." This line seemed absurd to me, but Foster was able to win over the National Board with it. Following the meeting, Foster wrote an article, "Left Sectarianism in the Fight for Negro Rights and Against White Chauvinism," which was successful in putting an end to this most vicious and destructive campaign.[16]

Foster's line of attack, however, effectively took the heat off the right and capitulated fully to the bourgeois reformists in the Party. Foster failed miserably to understand how the whole campaign served the right all along the way, from the further physical liquidation of the Party to pulling back from a leading role (or any role) in the mass movement, to substituting petty bourgeois nationalism and demagogy for our revolutionary line. White chauvinism was actually strengthened, becoming increasingly entrenched in the Party.

I tend to think that a number of honest comrades were not able to take a correct stand in this struggle because of a failure to understand the class basis of petty bourgeois nationalism and the potential threat it posed to the Party. The view was then prevalent that narrow nationalism was only a "reflex," a subjective reaction to white chauvinism. To combat it, one need only take up the fight against white chauvinism.

This view is fundamentally incorrect, although chauvinism certainly does stimulate such tendencies. Narrow nationalism has its own social and economic base among the ghetto nationalists of the Black petty bourgeois and bourgeois strata. The nationalism of these sections reflects, in the main, the struggle of the small Black entrepreneur or the middle class professional whose market and sphere of activity is confined almost exclusively to the ghetto. Such strata find themselves in competition both with small and medium-sized white business in the Black community, as well as with the monopolists. The nationalism of these strata has two aspects, one expressing their aspirations for social equality and against Jim Crow, the other expressing the tendency to retain the segregated market. Thus their stand toward imperialism is continually vacillating. I think too many comrades tended to confuse the progressive national aspirations of Black people for liberation, with narrow nationalism as an ideology.

I can now see in retrospect how well all this fit in with the growing attack on the Party's revolutionary line, which based itself on the fighting, principled unity of Black and white, and the leading role of the working class in the struggle for equality. As manifested within the Party, the petty bourgeois nationalist deviation reflected a lack of faith in the working class and its communist vanguard. How, the pessimists wondered, could the "inherently" racist white working class ever be rallied to support the fight for Black liberation? This pessimism was extended even to Black comrades who seriously fought for the internationalist position in the Party, as was evident in the attack on Belle and myself. This position is actually one of retreat before the ideology of white chauvinism, equivalent to giving up to the white supremacist enemy.

The "phony war" created hostility, bitterness and distrust among formerly close comrades. This was reflected in the break up of the Party organization and individuals into hostile camps. The constant pressures of outlandish charges, unprincipled accusations, police harassment and seemingly unresolvable antagonisms, had a telling effect on many individual relationships, including my relationship with Belle. Such circumstances eventually led to the breakup of our marriage in 1955.

A prime example of the ideological confusion and lack of clarity which accompanied the distorted struggle against white chauvinism was the Jefferson School Memorandum, whose principal author was Doxey Wilkerson. This document originated as papers prepared for an educational conference on "race theories" held by the school in the fall of 1951. The purported reason for the conference was to develop further "the Marxist conception of the Negro question as a national question."[17] But in the guise of polemics against "bourgeois racist ideology," it turned out to be another attack on our revolutionary position.

The authors' position was cloaked in a lot of pseudo-scientific verbiage, but boiled down to the outlandish argument that race and racial characteristics had nothing to do with the special oppression of Afro-Americans. The position was based on two fallacious ideas. The first was that "there are no races of mankind and the term 'Negro race' has no meaning and should be abandoned." The second was that the definition of "Negro" referred to a person who "shares the common psychological makeup of the Negro people of the United States."[18]

I was quite alarmed when I first read this memorandum. Coming as it did in the midst of the destructive campaign against white chauvinism, I felt it would further distort the struggle and introduce new confusion into an already poorly understood area.

Just how would the Party explain to the masses of Blacks that race was not a factor in their subjugation? How would the Party develop struggle against white chauvinism among the white workers if the "Negro race" did not exist? How would the Party uphold the special internationalist responsibilities of Afro-Americans to support the struggles of blacks in Africa and Latin America? Obviously, adopting Doxey's line would lead to isolating the Party from the masses of Blacks, abandoning the struggle to build a mass movement in support of Black rights among white workers, and undermining the militant solidarity of Afro-Americans with blacks in the third world.

I immediately wrote a rebuttal which I planned to give to the editorial board of *Political Affairs*. I argued that racial persecution of the Negro people is a particular form and device of national oppression, and that it was wrong to counterpose the two.[19] It was clearly idealism and not Marxism to try to overcome the phenomena of racial differences and white chauvinism by discarding the term "race." This denial of reality was one of the more bizarre forms taken by assimilationism.

The publication and circulation of the Wilkerson memorandum touched off considerable debate and discussion, which would last for almost a year. When I submitted my article to *Political Affairs*, I felt it would add to this discussion and help clarify the issues. I found, however, that Doxey and the co-authors of the memorandum had a protector in Betty Gannett. She was very reluctant to publish my article for its sharpness might discredit these "important leaders," members of the Party's Educational Department. After all, she said, the matter was still being discussed and meetings were scheduled to clarify the matter.

Despite its timeliness and my insistence, the publication of my article was postponed. I attended several of the meetings to discuss the position put forward by the memorandum. Even with the sharp discussion and the difficulty the authors had in defending their position, many comrades were reluctant to characterize the position for what it was—a harmful deviation which undermined the struggle against white chauvinism. In fact, the position struck at the roots of our revolutionary line by denying the concrete facts and particular forms of national oppression of Afro-Americans.

I realized that if Betty Gannett had her way, publication of my article would continue to be postponed. In early spring, several months after I submitted the draft to *Political Affairs*, I sent a copy to Foster and asked his opinion. I received a reply on April 21, 1952, in which he agreed with the main line of the article. He offered several criticisms which helped strengthen the document, and I incorporated them into a new draft. Evidently, he also sent copies of these letters to *Political Affairs* and to the Jefferson School. It wasn't long after I received his reply that I was called into another meeting with Lil Gates, Theodore Bassett and Alberto Moreau, the education director of the New York district. Doxey, Howard Selsam and David Goldway from the Jefferson School staff were also present.

I made a rather lengthy presentation at this meeting, reading my document. Doxey attempted to defend his position, but quickly found that those present no longer agreed with him. At one point Selsam exclaimed, "Doxey, you're talking like a bourgeois professor!" Doxey's position was thoroughly rejected and it was agreed that my article would be printed in the *PA*.

I was somewhat surprised, therefore, to see it wasn't in the next issue of the journal. I couldn't understand what had postponed its publication. My answer came in the August 1952 *PA* in an article titled "Race, Nation, and the Concept 'Negro' " by Doxey Wilkerson. The article was a lengthy self-criticism, rejecting his earlier formulations and characterizing it as a "theoretically unsound and politically harmful...deviation."

I found that he had adopted most of the criticisms I had made of his position. This recantation had been long in coming and its timing took much of the sting out of my polemic, rendering it as a rather anti-climactic part of the struggle. Finally, in October 1952, it was published, changed somewhat in light of Doxey's self-criticism. The long delay showed clearly that the leadership was not willing to give credit or prominence to any spokesman for the revolutionary tendency in the Party.

Wilkerson's theory was in itself of little significance, it was too preposterous to have any lasting impact. Its real significance was in the manner in which the Party leadership was able to use it to obscure the real issues and suppress the ideological struggle necessary to reassert a Marxist-Leninist position on the national question. By protecting and promoting Wilkerson's theory, the leadership forcibly shifted the focus of the debate away from the key questions: self-determination and the Party's leadership role in the Black liberation and working class struggle.

It was no accident that Wilkerson's assimilationist approach developed to muddy the waters in this period of the march to the right. It left the field open for all sorts of liberal bourgeois theories, and was an expression of the rising trend in the Party to tail after the bourgeois assimilationist leadership of the NAACP. Reformism in the field of work among Blacks would politically express itself much more clearly in the coming years with the complete acceptance of the NAACP as the vanguard, "the vital center of the Negro people's movement."[20]

The resurgence of this right wing trend in the Party was given added encouragement by the prosperity of the war and immediate post-war period. Figures from the Department of Labor reveal that during these years, for the first time in history, there appeared a trend toward closing the gap between Black and white living standards. From 1939 to 1947, earnings of Blacks increased from 41.4% to 54.3% of white wages.[21]

Big business in the U.S. was pushing more funds into the corruption and cooptation of Black leadership, the building up of a token elite as a contingency against future Black revolts. This corrupting influence was greatly stepped up during the cold war. The Truman Administration made a rash of appointments of Black assistants to the department heads and agencies of the federal government. A Black woman, Mrs. Edith Sampson, was appointed to the American Delegation to the United Nations.

Black "good will" ambassadors were dispatched to the former colonial nations of Asia and Africa to polish up the new image which Uncle Sam sought to present as the champion of peace, freedom and democracy. "Ambassadorial Uncle Toms," quipped Earl Brown, a journalist and later Harlem councilman. According to Black leaders, however, "integration was right around the corner." These hopes were later embodied by the NAACP's slogan, "Free by '63."

Direct and imminent integrationism was to continue as the dominant trend through the early stages of the Black Revolt until the rise of the Black power movement in the middle sixties. But the economic base of this brief Black prosperity was actually destroyed with the series of recessions that followed the Korean War. A structural type of unemployment developed, the result of permanent destruction of jobs by automation, rather than merely cyclical layoffs. The blow hit Blacks the hardest because they had the lowest seniority having entered industry the latest. The crisis in the cities was aggravated by the farm crisis which thrust a million Black soil tillers upon a shrinking labor market at a time when the skills they possessed were made obsolete by the new technology.

As a prelude to the Revolt of the sixties, deep unrest engulfed Black communities across the country. A small cloud no bigger than a man's fist, Elijah Muhammad's Nation of Islam, had already appeared on the horizon—a harbinger of the great Black power nationalist upsurge to come.

INTO THE MAINSTREAM

Despite such ominous portents, the right reformist tendency in the Party continued to gather strength in its attempt to subvert and overthrow our revolutionary position. It began at first covertly, as a sneak attack by the liberal integrationists like Jackson and Dennis, who formed the controlling group on the National Committee. We of the opposition found ourselves fighting a defensive action, unaware at first that the whole line was under attack. We struggled locally in clubs and sections, but we were rapidly overwhelmed by the integrationists who maintained the upper hand at all times. We were barred from the press and all other channels of inner-Party communication.

A full scale reformist offensive was kicked off by articles and writings of some leading Black communists, who exaggerated the progressive role of the NAACP leadership in the liberation movement. Such theories downplayed the need for a fight within the movement for the leadership of Black workers as a guarantee of the development of a consistent and militant struggle for Black rights. The theory for this position was elaborated by Charles T. Mann (pen name for James Jackson) in his pamphlet "Stalin's Thought Illustrates Problems of Negro Freedom," published in 1953.

Mann characterized the modern national liberation movement of colonial and subject peoples as primarily a "bourgeois effort," a struggle of the national bourgeoisie for control of its national markets, rather than a movement of the masses against imperialist oppression. This pamphlet was widely distributed in the Party and was understood to mean uncritical acceptance of Black right reformist leadership. It served as the opening gun in the attack on the Party's Black and working class cadres, especially its trade unionists, who according to Mann's position were "left sectarian" for not accepting bourgeois leadership.

With the Supreme Court decision of 1954 (Brown vs. the Board of Education, Topeka, Kansas) outlawing school segregation, the Party's pro-integrationist leadership threw all caution to the winds and went into panegyrics over the NAACP leadership. The revisionists unreservedly embraced the pro-imperialist swindle of imminent, peaceful, democratic "integration" of Black people into all aspects of American life under imperialism—dovetailing as it did with the Party's developing theory of peaceful, parliamentary transition to socialism.

In 1956, Ben Davis wrote that "a realistic perspective has opened up for a peaceful and democratic achievement of the full social, political and economic equality of the Negro people within the framework of our specific American system and tradition."[22] Agreeing wholeheartedly with the NAACP, the Party leadership concluded that the Jim Crow system was threatened with imminent destruction and the Supreme Court decision was the triumph of the NAACP's policy of legal opposition. Doxey Wilkerson hailed Thurgood Marshall, then a member of the NAACP's legal staff, as the "hero of the Supreme Court battle."

But the facts are that this decision, historic in its effect, was a tactical concession. Its objective was to lull the rising Black movement at home, bolstering the faltering bourgeois assimilationist leadership and quieting adverse criticism from abroad. Dr. Mordecai Johnson, then president of Howard University, put this forward at the 1954 CIO convention in Cleveland. Johnson alluded to the fact that the decision had been immediately translated into forty languages. "One could conclude from that that the power of world socialism wrested this concession from the American ruling class circles," he said.[23]

During this period the Party completely underestimated the explosive nature of the Black movement, denying the possibility of a revolutionary upsurge of Blacks. According to the revisionists, the Black struggle did not have an independent character, but was simply an offshoot of the larger workers' movement.

Just two years before the bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama, James Jackson wrote: "To the Negro masses in the South who have yet to win their elementary democratic right to vote, to remove the Jim Crow pale in the street cars, to sit in the public parks—such a slogan of action would be rejected, considered 'utopian.' "[24]

In the year of the boycott, Jackson actually went so far as to compare left centers in the Black movement with dual unionism.[25] These influential left centers were actually liquidated in the course of the general retreat of the rightists. The thinking behind this policy was that the NAACP covered the field, and there was no need for us to intervene.

It was at this time that the Civil Rights Congress was dissolved, despite the militant mass campaigns it had waged on behalf of Dixie lynch victims and the impact of *We Charge Genocide.* The Southern Negro Youth Congress was allowed to fall apart as early as 1947, when leading Black cadres were assigned to other areas of work. The liquidation of the Council on African Affairs, which was headed by Dr. DuBois, Dr. Alpheus Hunton and Paul Robeson, immediately followed the historic Bandung Conference in 1955.[26] *Freedom,* the sole organ of the left in the Black liberation movement, was also closed down at this time. By the mid-fifties, the Party in the South had, for all intents and purposes, once again been liquidated.

The National Negro Labor Councils (NNLC) was the largest and potentially the most influential organization dissolved by the Party in this period. The NNLC drew about 1,000 delegates, mostly Blacks from the basic industries, to its first three conventions and led numerous mass struggles against discrimination on the job.[27]

After the war, there were large concentrations of Black workers in auto, steel, the packing houses and other heavy industries. These workers demanded leadership in the fight against company and union discrimination. The NNLC, calling openly for unity between the Black freedom struggle and the labor movement, supplied this leadership in successful campaigns to get Blacks hired at Sears and many other companies.

The Councils mobilized Blacks and some whites to oppose the chauvinist leadership in unions like UAW Local 600 (Ford's River Rouge plant). The NNLC was also active in Black communities, as in Louisville, where their successful campaign for jobs showed a militant working class alternative to the increasingly conservative NAACP.

When the Black movement surged forward in 1955, it cried out for Black working class leadership that the CP, the NNLC and *Freedom* could have provided. But the CP leadership united in opposition to everything that diverted the masses from the "mainstream" of the NAACP and the AFL-CIO.

With the consolidation of this liquidationist line, the Party leadership attacked the NNLC. In June 1956, Benjamin Davis openly criticized the work of these councils and said that they had led to the "isolation of many Negro trade union cadres from the main body of the Negro and white workers," and that as a result these cadres became "almost powerless to affect the mainstream of organized labor."[28] The dissolution of these centers left a void in the movement, with many Party and non-Party cadres becoming demoralized, resigning from activity.

With as good a sense of timing as ever, A. Philip Randolph stepped into the void that the Party had left behind. In 1960 he founded the Negro American Labor Council (NALC) with the intent of harnessing the militant caucus movement under the firm control of the AFL-CIO bureaucracy. Randolph, and under his leadership the NALC, refused to take a firm stand against discrimination. Randolph openly stated at the founding convention that discrimination in the unions was "no reflection on the leadership of the AFL-CIO."[29] At the 1962 convention, the councils failed to take up the NAACP petition to the NLRB, which would have had two unions decertified for failure to represent Black workers.

The rightist line on the Afro-American question was of course a part of the whole rightward drift in the Party. Under the slogan of "getting into the mainstream," the Party attempted to liquidate all left centers and independent communist work. A number of articles were written at that time, many of them coming from underground leadership, which criticized "purism," "self-isolation" and "left sectarianism" in our work, characterizing "leftism" as the main danger in the Party.

In December 1952, the "Draft Resolution on the Situation Growing Out of the Presidential Elections" authorized by the National Committee stated that "it was incorrect to have favored departure of Wallace forces without the masses of the Democratic Party."[30] According to the resolution, the major, if not exclusive, hope for progress was to be found in the Democratic Party. If the masses of workers weren't ready to desert the Democrats, neither was the CPUSA. This move also signalled the beginning of the destruction of the American Labor Party in New York State, where it still maintained considerable strength. Consequently, the Party lost influence among many progressives.

A more mature expression of this revisionist line came with the Draft Program which appeared in April 1954, a month before the historic Supreme Court decision. The major slogans of action put forward in the document called for "A New Congress in 1954" and a "New Administration in 1956." The draft Program boldly asserted that "what is needed is a new administration which starts to build again where the New Deal left off."[31]

This document excluded all mention of the right of self-determination. I questioned this at a meeting of the program committee prior to the passage of the resolution. I asked Betty Gannett what had happened to the right of self-determination. Why wasn't there a mention of it in the Program? True, we were discussing the Party's minimal program and self-determination certainly wouldn't be fully laid out and explained in such a document. Yet it was a strategic slogan which, like socialism, had to be mentioned in relation to the Party's minimal demands. Neither Gannett nor Pettis Perry, who was also present, knew what to say. They didn't seem prepared to discuss the question at the time. It was at this meeting that I first began to suspect that the leadership might once again try to liquidate the right of self-determination and the revolutionary program for Black liberation.

In the face of such open reformism, it isn't difficult to see why all attempts to do independent mass work were attacked and labeled "left sectarian." I was working in Harlem with my old seaman friend, Josh Lawrence, and his organizational secretary, Pat Lumpkin, a very energetic and forceful Black woman. We had a hell of a fight with Lil Gates and Blake Charney, New York's organizational secretary, who tried to liquidate our work. We waged a good battle against them, but in the end very little was accomplished. As a result of the internal struggle, we did little mass work, and this was a general tendency in the Party at the time.

It was in this period that all proposals for mass work—in the mainstream or anywhere else—and any attempt by communists to play a leading role were discouraged, condemned and fought against by the leadership. Those of us who did try to do mass work were not helped or encouraged in any way, but rather castigated and beaten down, accused of being "left sectarian." We were told to have respect for the bourgeois reformists in the Black liberation movement, for the bureaucrats of the trade union aristocracy, to "lay off" and "wait for favorable conditions to arise" for our full participation. Through such policies, the Party increasingly lost its once important roots in the shops, mills and Black working class communities.

In the course of these years I married Gwen Midlo. She was a young Jewish woman whom I had met earlier in Paris, when she and her husband were both music students there. She came from New Orleans, where she had been an active member of the Southern Negro Youth Congress, participating in the Wallace campaign, the Civil Rights Congress and many other mass campaigns of the Party in the South. We had political agreement on the major questions and in particular on the Black national question.

Chapter 22

Revisionism Takes Command

By the time of the April 1956 National Committee meeting, the Party was in the throes of its most serious crisis since 1944. The meeting itself was historic in that it was the first time that the top Party leadership had met together since 1951. With the exception of Gil Green and Henry Winston who were underground and Bob Thompson and Gus Hall who were still in jail, the National Committee was up from underground and out of prison. Right opportunism, which had been thriving and undergoing continuous growth in the fifties, erupted into a full fledged liquidationist line whose only logical conclusion would be the complete destruction of the Party as a revolutionary force.

Fresh out of the Atlanta Penitentiary, Eugene Dennis gave the main political report at this meeting. This one-sided, thoroughly negative report placed all the blame for the Party's mistakes and isolation upon dogmatism and "left sectarianism." He called for a "new look" at our past errors and the development of a mass party of socialism.

The effect of this report was to open the floodgates to the blatantly liquidationist faction led by John Gates, editor of the *Daily Worker*. Gates and his cronies on the *Daily Worker* and in the New York State Committee attacked the CP from all sides with the express purpose of dissolving the CP as a Marxist-Leninist vanguard party. Gates pushed for the abandonment of the Party's leading role and the development of pressure group politics whose organizational form would be a political action association—very much like Browder's CPA of 1944.

Gates called for a "critical reevaluation" of Marxism-Leninism. "If anyone asks me whether I base myself on the principles of Marx and Lenin, I want to be able to answer which of those principles I believe in and which I do not."[1]

This open liquidationist faction made skillful use of the confusion that resulted from Khrushchev's anti-Stalin "revelations." The secret revelations stunned the American Party and in effect deprived the anti-revisionist forces of an ally we had relied on in the past.[2] The international communist movement had historically lent the weight of its influence and prestige to the left in the American Party. For example: the Third International's assistance in bringing together the two principle organizations—the Communist Party and the United Communist Party to form the Communist Party USA in 1921; Comintern leadership in the struggle against the factionalism of the twenties and Lovestone's American exceptionalism; and the Duclos letter which helped initiate the struggle against Browderism.

Rather than finding a source of support in the Soviet Union, we on the left were thrown completely off balance by the new "revelations." At first we couldn't believe Khrushchev made such a speech, thinking it must be some imperialist propaganda stunt. When this initial reaction passed we tended to give the new Soviet leadership the benefit of the doubt and failed to grasp the full implications of this attack on Stalin.

The liquidationist right used this as an excuse to attack proletarian internationalism in general, calling for a sweeping reevaluation of our line. They bitterly denounced our past history as one of slavishly clinging to imported doctrines, the bankruptcy of which was now being proven. Under the guise of "fighting dogmatism" inherited from the era of the "cult of personality," the Gates crowd concluded that Leninism was nothing more than Marxism applied to the peculiar, backward condition of Russia—a purely "Russian social phenomenon"—and therefore not applicable in the U.S. They found Lenin's theories of the bourgeois state as an instrument of class rule to be particularly outmoded under U.S. conditions. It was in this spirit of "reexamination," that the entire National Committee—with the exception of Foster and Ed Strong—voted to condemn the use of Soviet troops against the reactionary CIA-inspired counter-revolution in Hungary in October 1956.

Personally, I was most interested in the role that Ben Davis played at the April board meeting. We had met earlier in the year, not long after Davis got out of jail. We had had some friendly discussions. He said he wanted to get my ideas on the developments in the Afro-American question in order to help him prepare for the report he was going to make at the meeting. Despite the sharp disagreements we had had in the past, I felt then that we were largely in agreement. I thought that perhaps his years in jail had changed him, given him cause to reevaluate our past differences. We concluded this series of meetings on a friendly basis.

In May, however, I learned it was the same old Ben—the same sly, ruthless politician, who used his authority and that of Foster to further his own personal power and influence. In his report, Davis strongly attacked our revolutionary position, dropping completely the right of self-determination. At the National Committee meeting in June he restated this position: "It would seem that the slogan of self-determination should be abandoned and our position otherwise modified and brought up to date."[3] This sharp attack took me by surprise because he had given no indication whatsoever in our earlier discussions of any major differences.

Plans for the Sixteenth Party Convention to be held the following February were being made at this meeting. A draft resolution was to be prepared as soon as possible and pre-convention discussion and debate begun. But the draft resolution was not published until September 1956, providing little time for adequate discussion and rebuttal from the opposing points of view. Dennis, who had come under attack from the Gates faction, had made some amendments to his April report. But the draft resolution was still more or less a restatement of his position at the April meeting, characterizing "left sectarianism" as the main danger in the Party.

The draft carried the hallmarks of much of what we know today as the liberal and reformist program of the CPUSA. Central to a peaceful, parliamentary, constitutional transition to socialism would be the development of an anti-monopoly coalition through "labor and popular" forces gaining "decisive influence in key Democratic Party state organizations and even liberal Republican political movements." Thus would develop the "American Road to Socialism." The Communist Party would remain on the sidelines to "support and endorse" such progressive campaigns. On the Afro-American question, the right of self-determination was completely omitted and the Party urged wholehearted acceptance of the NAACP slogan of "Free By '63." Working class leadership and proletarian revolution were entirely excluded from this document. The National Board voted in favor of the resolution, Foster and Davis voting a qualified "yes."

In October 1956, Foster, who had been vacillating all along, changed his mind and voted against the resolution. In an article entitled "On the Party Situation," he outlines the reasons for this change.[4] Citing the development of a "new Browderism" and a re-emergence of American exceptionalism in the Party, he attacked the attempts to openly liquidate the Party, to drop Marxism-Leninism from the preamble of the constitution and the failure to see rightism as a cancer to the Party. Foster also attacked Dennis's support of a "mass party of socialism."[5]

The article for the first time indicated to the rank and file the nature of the factional split then going on in the leadership and stimulated much debate over the genuine criticism of rightism that it raised. In the final analysis, however, the article failed to provide a firm basis for a consistent fight against the right because of Foster's basic unity with the other factions on the question of the main danger. To Foster ultra-leftism was unquestionably the main danger, and as an example he cited the hesitancy with which the Party took up the theory of peaceful transition! He failed totally to understand how this very estimate of the main danger had through the years fostered and nurtured the cancer-like growth of right opportunism and stifled the fight against revisionism in the Party.

Pre-convention discussions around the draft were hot and heavy. The right contended that we had to "seriously" and "creatively" scrutinize our past history, reevaluate our goals. They passed off any criticism of their position as "old" and "dogmatic," a refusal to consider fresh approaches or make a new start. Anyone who attacked them was immediately labeled a "left sectarian."

I attended several meetings of the National Negro Commission as part of the pre-convention discussions that fall. The leadership inundated these meetings with articles concerning "new data" on the Black Belt, a reevaluation of the Black Belt theory in light of massive outmigrations from the deep South. I argued against these positions, that the development and existence of an oppressed Black nation in the South was not merely a question of nose-counting. As I later wrote in *For a Revolutionary Position on the Negro Question* (1957):

> This approach blurs over the main essence of the question. Even with the outmigrations of the war and post-war period, the old majority Black Belt area contains the greatest concentration of the Negro people in the U.S. Approximately five million Negroes, nearly a third of the entire Negro population in the country (17 million) and nearly one-half of the Negroes in the South are still concentrated in the old Black Belt majority area. The fact is that the Negro population in the Black Belt *is larger* than the total population of 34 countries who are members of the UN![6]

I was heartened to see that I was not alone. A number of Black comrades were opposed to this "reevaluation" by the right and the dropping of our revolutionary position. I remember particularly Ed Strong—a stalwart young Black man who spoke very strongly in defense of our position.

Ed was then a member of the NC and it seemed to me that he had great potential as a leader of the left. As a young seminary student in Chicago, he came into the movement in the early thirties through the National Youth Congress. He became national secretary of that organization and was a founder and first executive secretary of the Southern Negro Youth Congress. He eventually was elected chairman of the youth committee of the National Negro Congress and, at the time of these discussions, was organizer of the Eastern Pennsylvania District of the Party.

Unfortunately, Strong was never able to attend the Sixteenth Party Convention. By that time, he was hospitalized with terminal cancer and died in April 1957. His death was not only a personal loss, but a blow to the left forces in the Party.

These discussions and the pre-convention meetings in the districts served to begin the consolidation of a genuine Marxist-Leninist left. For a short time, the left forces were able to build a tentative tactical unity with the Foster-Davis faction which made some show of wanting to fight the openly liquidationist Gates faction. This unity, however, was quickly shattered with the Foster-Gates unity deal at the New York State pre-convention meeting.

Foster, who was in danger of not being elected as a delegate to the convention, made the infamous deal on "name and form" of the Party in exchange for the votes of the Gates faction. While rejecting the dissolution of the Party, a resolution was passed with Gates's support which held that "any and all proposals to change the name, form or policies of the Party can and should be examined and discussed on their merits"—thus leaving the door wide open to future proposals from the Gates bunch.[7]

Widely separated and lacking central leadership, the left forces nonetheless continued to grow. We began to gain ideological clarity through criticizing the opportunism of the Party line. The pre-convention meetings were the first organized means on a national level of examining the Party's line since the Fifteenth Party Convention in 1950. Since that time, those who opposed the growing revisionism in the Party remained dispersed and confused, with no regular access to any of the Party machinery through which to air their views. The leadership deliberately kept Marxist-Leninist education to a minimum, as part of their attempt to maintain the status quo.

They had systematically suppressed dissent and all forms of inner-Party democracy. Many of the comrades who came together in the left caucus at the Sixteenth Party Convention had locally and individually raised struggles against revisionism in their districts, but were pretty much unaware of how widespread dissent was in the Party as a whole. We were pleasantly surprised to see just how many cadre there were who still had agreement on the basic principles of Marxism-Leninism for the dictatorship of the proletariat and socialism, for the right of self-determination in the deep South, in support of proletarian internationalism, and against the theory of peaceful transition to socialism—although there was some confusion on this point as a result of the Khrushchev revelations.

Al Lannon became the leader of the caucus and one hell of a guy he was too. He was a member of the National Committee and the Party leader on the waterfront. I had always liked and admired Al as a man with both feet on the ground, and with a keen ability to combine theory and practice. He was an old Lenin School man and had been a seaman for many years before becoming a Party functionary in 1938.

He was a fearless, dauntless fighter and had just recently been released from a stint in prison on a Smith Act conviction when he came to the convention. I could see that he was sore as hell with the revisionism of the leadership, grabbing the microphone at every possible opportunity. Other members of the caucus included Joe Dougher, a leader of the anthracite miners and a member of the NC; James Keller, the D.O. of Chicago; Armando Román, a Puerto Rican leader on the waterfront in New York and a member of the New York State Committee; Ted Allen, a young guy and former D.O. from West Virginia; Angel Torres, another waterfront cadre; Olga, a Venezuelan comrade who had played a leading role in the struggles of Latino people in New York City; my wife Gwen; and many others.

THE SIXTEENTH PARTY CONVENTION

By the time of the convention, February 9-12, 1957, three distinct factions had emerged on the right. Gates led a blatant and vulgar far right group which was openly anti-Soviet and supported both the ideological and physical liquidation of the Party. Aside from Gates, it included men like Blake Charney, organizational secretary of New York; Joseph Clark, a *Daily Worker* reporter; and Steve Nelson, the D.O. of Western Pennsylvania.

The center-right faction was led by Eugene Dennis and included James Jackson and Jack Stachel. A more covert and insidious right danger, this faction called for ideological liquidation of the Party's vanguard role, but favored the maintenance of some sort of social democratic structure from which to wield power. They also supported the Soviet Union.

The left-center faction was represented by Foster and his allies: Ben Davis, Will Weinstone and Bob Thompson, who was at the time still in jail. This group perceived a right danger in the Party—the other two factions—but still conceded that leftism was the main danger. They also had more reservations about openly doing away with the vanguard party.

All three factions had unity on the basic political questions—support for the theory of peaceful, parliamentary and constitutional transition to socialism; a bourgeois assimilationist position on the Afro-American question; a view of left sectarianism as the main danger historically in the Party; and a wavering stand at best, total abandonment at worst, on the question of proletarian internationalism.

This was particularly blatant in the convention's refusal to change its position on Hungary, or to acknowledge the various criticisms of the Party's revisionism as put forward by Jacques Duclos and various Latin American parties. As if to proclaim its independence from Marxism-Leninism, the convention refused to take a stand against U.S. intervention in Latin America and in support of independence for Puerto Rico.

The Sixteenth Party Convention was a fateful turning point in our Party's history—the point from which the Party turned inevitably and unalterably down the road to revisionism, the point from which the task of building a new anti-revisionist communist party became the primary task of Marxist-Leninists.

In discussing this historic event, I must say something of the despicable role played by James Jackson. Earlier he had been sent

South by Eugene Dennis and at the time was secretary of the Southern region of the Party. It became obvious at the convention that Dennis had sent him South for the purpose of presiding over the liquidation of the Party in that region. Jackson never did see the need for a vanguard party in the South and openly stated in the pre-convention discussions that the existing reformist-led movement organizes "the maximum political, economic and moral strength of the Black masses and their white allies to bear upon the monopoly ruling circles."[8]

Jackson brought several Southern delegates with him to the convention, but in the main, the South was represented by proxies—many of whom had never been further South than Brooklyn. He claimed that it was too dangerous to bring Southern delegates to the convention. I thought this was rather interesting since we had managed to bring such delegates, including Black sharecroppers, in the midst of the worst lynch terror of the thirties.

Jackson actually used these "Southern" proxies to build a cheering section of his supporters on the floor. The main thrust of the line he pushed was to drop the right of self-determination, which, given the strength of the left at the convention, meant avoiding entirely a discussion of it! Jackson contended that we could develop a program of practical action and deal with the political line at some other time. Together with Carl Winter and Doxey Wilkerson (a member of the Gates faction and soon to quit the Party), he wrote the main resolution on the Afro-American question—a thoroughly reformist document that avoided any fundamental discussion of line or of the right of self-determination.

Jackson's efforts to forestall discussion were given material support by an arrangement between our caucus and Foster. It was obvious that Gates was then out to liquidate the Party right there on the spot. Foster approached us, seeking to block against Gates, and asked that we support a move to take the question off the convention agenda, postponing discussion and leaving settlement of the matter to a special national conference on Afro-American work to be held within sixty days of the convention.

First things first. The main question before the convention was to "save the Party" from the open liquidationism of Gates. Foster argued that full discussion of the Black national question would have split the conference wide open and played directly into the hands of the Gates faction. At the time, we thought it was the right thing to do and went along with Foster's deal. But, as we shall see, the promised national conference on Afro-American work was never held.

There was a very widespread rumor about Ben Davis at the convention and I have no doubt that it's true. The story goes that someone in the Dennis faction asked Davis why he and Foster were going around making deals with the "ultra-lefts." Davis replied, "We've got to deal with Gates first. When we've dealt with him, then we can handle the left sectarians."

The convention proceedings, which strictly followed Roberts' Rules, were characterized by extreme bureaucratic suppression of the rank and file. Even so, I thought we did pretty well on the floor. Lannon was the fastest on his feet and got the microphone more than the rest of us. The revisionists have chosen to print precious few of his speeches in the official transcript of the convention proceedings, but there were still a few important remarks included. For instance: "On the question of social democracy, I think the effort here is to slur over and obscure the differences that exist between ourselves and social democracy. We are not discussing here what are the possibilities for a united front—that's one thing, but no united front is possible without a clear understanding of what our differences are. United fronts come about not by slurring over differences and hiding them....I'm for a united front with social democracy, but always making clear that we are not social democrats. We have a different program, and united front is based on certain common needs which both agree to while we disagree." And: "On the question of a mass party of socialism, I think that's just...pie in the sky, and will divert, because I think the pre-condition to that is centering all of our work on the rebuilding and reconstituting of a Marxist-Leninist Communist Party." [9]

I was able to speak only once and used the little time I had to attack the Party's line on the Black national question. While the revisionists thought that the question could be solved peacefully, as more and more Blacks left the South and became part of the industrial working class, I pointed out that these developments—particularly the proletarianization of Blacks—actually sharpened the fundamental contradictions involved.

I further contended that the Party failed completely to understand the tremendous potential of the revolt then gathering in the South. On a world scale, this revolt held particular significance as "a national revolutionary movement in the heartland of U.S. imperialism, the bulwark of world reaction." Calling on the Party to stop tailing the bourgeois assimilationists, I stated "It is not enough to greet these new, heroic struggles in the South. The embattled Negro people want our help. They cannot win alone. They need our Party, movement, and the international working class movement, to support their struggle."[10]

To be sure, such views were drowned in a swamp of revisionism. When all the hoopla was done, the September draft resolution was passed pretty much intact with all three of the right wing factions declaring a great victory, a new "unity of all trends," and a "defeat against revisionism." Dennis—the arch conciliationist—came out in the strongest position, indicating throughout the convention the future course he would take in fully conceding to the far right.

Dennis spoke strongly in defense of the rights of minorities, arguing in typical Dennis doublespeak that "there is also a realization that the more truly democratic we become, the more we need to be a cohesive and united organization which guarantees the minority's right to dissent at *all* times." Indicating the extent of his own unity with the line of the Gates faction, he went on to say, "Further, I believe that there is much sober thought being given to what we mean by a new and sounder relationship with other Marxist parties, including those in the socialist countries."[11]

It was clear from the start that all the talk of expanded democracy and minority rights would not be extended to the Marxist-Leninist left, which posed the main threat to the other three factions.

Gates, who was unsuccessful in his bid for a political action association, nevertheless came out of the convention fairly strong, with a number of his supporters on the NC and in key positions in state organizations. During the last session of the convention, he was moved to say that "no matter who lost, the Party has won."[12] Foster, who had initially expressed the strongest opposition to the line of the resolution, stated, "I too, want to support this recommendation. I think it is the best we can do under the circumstances,"[13] and then informed the delegates that he had voted for every document in the resolution.

This was the last Party convention that Foster, then seventy-seven years old, was able to attend. A *New York Times* article, which appeared to be based on inside sources, reported that "William Z. Foster suffered a stinging humiliation yesterday....In the voting to elect a seventeen member executive committee out of the sixty-six member National Committee, Mr. Foster was said to have failed of election. He obtained a place only when a motion was adopted to expand the group from seventeen to twenty."[14] Whether or not this report is accurate, Foster's influence dwindled in the following years until his death in the Soviet Union in September 1961.

He wrote a number of articles in this period, among them "The Party Crisis and the Way Out,"[15] which indicated that revisionism had not been defeated at the Sixteenth Party Convention, though "ultra-leftism" still remained the main danger in the Party. Foster suffered a stroke around the time of its publication, but recuperated sufficiently to write several other articles. In collaboration with Ben Davis, he wrote "Notes on the Negro Question,"[16] which supported the Party's assimilationist line.

Perhaps the most controversial was a letter Foster wrote personally to Chairman Mao in which he praised the progress China had made in the struggle to build socialism and discussed the situation in the U.S. and the world.[17] He received a warm response from Chairman Mao, who thanked Foster for his letter and said, "Allow me, on behalf of the Communist Party of China and the Chinese people, to extend hearty greetings to you, glorious fighter and leader of the American working class, and wish you an early recovery."[18] The letter had been sent in

December 1958, without the approval of the Party's Secretariat. They would have liked to have overlooked the matter entirely, but were unable to do so when Foster's letter and Mao's response were published in the *New York Times.*[19] The Party was finally forced to publish the exchange in the March 1959 *Political Affairs.*

The so-called "unity of all trends" reached at the Sixteenth Party Convention represented a compromise on fundamental questions and principles, arriving at a formula which legalized the open liquidationist Gates faction within the Party and stifled the necessary ideological struggle against revisionism. Thus, although the Party avoided an open split, it was saddled with a conciliationist line in a period when ideological confusion was rampant in the ranks. The Sixteenth Party Convention was characterized by the total abandonment of revolutionary line and principle on all questions in favor of a sham unity of the right wing, with each of the three right factions scrambling for position.

A gallop to the right under the guise of "unity" followed the convention, with Dennis putting into practice the thoroughly revisionist program adopted there. The liquidation of the Party as a Marxist-Leninist vanguard was further intensified as Dennis made repeated concessions to the open liquidators. In an effort to keep peace with the Gates faction, "democracy" and public criticism of the Party was greatly expanded. "Freedom of criticism" in this case meant the freedom to further hasten the conversion of a communist party into a social democratic party of reforms, the freedom to counterpose bourgeois theories to communist theories.

While the leadership cried "unity of all trends," they actually meant the unprincipled unity of the three right factions in opposition to the Marxist-Leninists. We in the left attacked this phony unity at the reconvened district conventions and played a major role in upsetting the "unity slates" at the New York State, Brooklyn and Manhattan County conventions. However, we were unable to prevent the Davis-Charney unity deal at the New York State Convention. Ben Davis became state chairman, while Charney, a Gates man, became executive secretary.

The tactics of three groups—the open liquidators, the right-center and the "left" conciliators—were very similar. They kept trying to forestall any kind of meaningful discussion. The revisionists continued their effort to separate a program for mass work from any basic, fundamental discussion of line. Ben Davis and others ushered in the demagogic slogan of "let's get going." "The party membership is sick and tired of internal strife and bickering over nebulous abstractions," said Davis in the *Party Voice.*[20]

I made a speech at the reconvened convention in Harlem, fighting for restoration of our revolutionary position on the Afro-American question and an end to tailing after the leadership of the NAACP. Davis immediately attacked me. "Left to Harry here, he and me would be left alone fighting it down to the ropes. We can't afford that, we gotta get to work!"

Following the state conventions, the Lannon forces were strong enough to be elected to a number of posts on the New York State Committee and were well represented on the Manhattan County Committee. Gwen was a section leader in Brooklyn, and we had actual leadership in two vital concentrations—the waterfront and Harlem and lower Harlem. Our strength was considerable when one takes into account the fact that the New York district comprised over half the membership of the Party at that time.

The promised national conference on the Negro question was stalled, postponed and inevitably never held. Many of our Black cadres resigned or were driven out by the revisionist bureaucracy. Dues payments and club attendance dropped, *Daily Worker* circulation was down to 5,000 daily and 10,000 on Sunday.[21]

It was becoming more and more evident that the leadership actually had a plan to drive the left out of the Party through bureaucratic suppression and harassment. James Jackson acting as Dennis's lieutenant personally supervised a campaign to drive militant Blacks out of the Party. It was clear to us that the leadership would *never* hold a national conference on work among Blacks while there were still cadres left to fight for the revolutionary line.

In the face of growing pressure from below, however, they were forced to sponsor a few local conferences. This was done with the expressed purpose of holding down dissent, while continuing to postpone any fundamental discussion of our line.

I remember one conference in New York where the revisionists packed the meeting with white trade union cadres, many of them right wingers and covert white chauvinists, who at a signal from Davis or Jackson would begin chanting, "Get to work, get to work!"

Jackson pulled off an outstanding piece of demagogy as he stood up with Paul Robeson's book *Here I Stand,*[22] and proclaimed "Program? This is all the program we need." The book, while an excellent exposition of Robeson's political views as a militant anti-imperialist and class-conscious fighter, could by no means serve as a fundamental program for the Party's work in the Black movement, and Jackson knew it!

In late 1957, I completed work on *For a Revolutionary Position on the Negro Question.* A summation of a number of unpublished articles I had written against reformism in the fifties, the struggles at the Sixteenth Party Convention and afterward, it was intended to give ideological clarity to the emerging left in the Party and was later adopted as an official document of the Provisional Organizing Committee (POC). The paper attacked the Party's right wing line and Jackson's view that it would be an "unwarranted interference" for the Party to continue its support of the right of self-determination, undermining the correct leadership of the bourgeois assimilationists. My paper attacks the revisionists' failure to understand the basic orientation on the question, that "without the perspective of *Political Power,* the Negro peoples' movement is reduced to an impotent appeal to the conscience or humanitarian instincts of the country and the world."[23]

It was essential in this paper to answer James Allen's latest theories. Abandoning his former support for the right of self-determination, Allen had become the main theoretical gun of the revisionists. His basically economic determinist approach was to describe an inevitable disintegration of the Black Belt nation now in process as a result of the "forces of capitalist development of great expansive power, which has lasted well into the era of monopoly capitalism."[24] According to Allen, this disintegration was heralded by the failure of the elements of nationhood not only to exist in the Black Belt, but to *be in a full state of maturation.* He failed to understand that "imperialist oppression, in stifling the development of nations, creates the conditions for the rise of national revolutionary movements which, in this epoch, are a special phase of the struggle for socialism. This creates the basis for the revolutionary alliance of the oppressed peoples with the international working class in the struggle against the common enemy, imperialism."[25]

On November 16, 1957, a declaration was signed in Moscow which had a major effect on the CPUSA. This was the "Declaration of Communist and Workers Parties of Socialist Countries," referred to as the "Twelve Party Declaration." (The signatories included the Communist Parties of Albania, Bulgaria, Hungary, North Vietnam, East Germany, China, North Korea, Mongolia, Poland, Rumania, USSR and Czechoslovakia.) The declaration held that proletarian internationalism as could be understood through the lessons of history required "support of the Soviet Union and all the Socialist countries who, pursuing a policy of preserving peace throughout the world, are the mainstay of peace and social progress."[26]

The Gates forces were adamantly opposed to our officially adopting the statement and resented the arguments of the more pro-Soviet elements in the leadership. The debates surrounding our adoption of the declaration and the threatened liquidation of the *Daily Worker,* which by this time consistently carried anti-party, anti-Soviet and anti-communist propaganda, brought the resignation of John Gates in January 1958. (The declaration was adopted at the next NC meeting in February 1958.) A stream of his supporters resigned following this. The whole incident brought a factional realignment in the leadership at the February 1958 National Committee meeting, with the Dennis right-center and the Thompson-Davis left-center sharing the leadership, although Dennis was definitely the top man.

Gates's departure signalled the end of "all trends unity," the end to the era of "freedom of criticism," and a new cry in the leadership for centralism. Factionalism was outlawed and Thompson issued an ultimatum to the left at the June 1958 NC meeting. "Our Party...has the capacity to declare war on factionalism...whether from the direction of revisionism or the direction of dogmatism," said Thompson.[27] With the leadership slapping themselves on the back for their so-called "victory against revisionism"—the resignation of Gates and friends—it was obvious that the immediate task was to get rid of the "ultra-lefts."

Our strength and influence were growing and with Gates's resignation, conditions were favorable for advancing the struggle against revisionism and conciliationism—for strengthening the leadership and prestige of the consistent Marxist forces. In spite of this situation, however, our left forces under the political leadership of Armando Román fell into a series of ultra-left errors which in the long run led to the dissipation of our prestige and influence and eventually to our isolation from a large number of honest forces who were in agreement with us.

We had gradually become more and more oriented towards the narrow, inflexible tactic of attack and exposure. Under these conditions, the fundamental political questions upon which the caucus was founded became relegated to secondary importance as we largely confined ourselves to attacking the Party's position. Our purely oppositionist tactics, combined with a refusal to participate in mass work, enabled the Party leadership to portray us as anti-Party and disruptive elements. Some of the most blatant ultra-left errors of this period included a refusal to accept posts on the Manhattan County Staff (particularly Armando's refusal to accept the key post of education director of the county); the boycott of the *Daily Worker,* even after the resignation of Gates; and the failure to fight for publication of articles stating our political position through the official channels of the Party.

I must admit self-critically that I tended to overlook these errors, thinking they were just individual mistakes of a tactical nature—not the reflection of an entire ultra-left line. After years of fighting arch right-wingers, many other comrades in the caucus made the same mistake. With Thompson's ultimatum to the left, many of us began to think that we would very soon be expelled and agreed with Armando's view that we should openly split with the Party—a decision which I now think was incorrect and played directly into the hands of the revisionists, who were able to isolate us even further from the rank and file. This decision resulted in the formation of the Provisional Organizing Committee for a Communist Party (POC), founded in August 1958.

Some eighty-three delegates, mostly Black and Puerto Rican working class cadres, attended the founding conference in New York. There was much enthusiasm, even euphoria, at the conference—we thought we were really on the way to building a new party. Joe Dougher and myself were elected co-chairmen, Armando became the general secretary. Other members of the executive committee included Admiral Kilpatrick of Cleveland, Ted Allen from West Virginia, Angel Torres and Lucille Bethancourt from Cleveland.

For all our fond hopes, the POC continued under Armando's leadership in an isolationist line and soon deteriorated into an ultra-left sect. There was an absolute refusal to apply theory to practice and become involved in the day-to-day work among the masses; a rejection on principle of any compromise under any circumstances over any question, even over purely practical matters. Those who opposed such dogmatism were promptly labeled "conciliators." The POC was rife with inner caucus witchhunts, personal slander and character assassination. Armando set himself up as an infallible demigod who instinctively could sniff out not only the "conciliators" in our ranks, but the "conciliators of the conciliators." There was, to many of us, the distinct smell of police agentry about all this.

In October 1958, Armando called together a rump conference to have Gwen, myself and a number of other comrades expelled from the POC. This followed a number of splits with leading comrades like Lannon, Jim Keller in Chicago and Pat Lumpkin, all of which had been initiated by Armando. I had unwittingly allowed myself to be a part of some of this. It began to smell a little fishy to me though, and I demanded an investigation and the opening of all files. The result was a slander campaign against me—questioning my motives and charging me with abandoning principle—and finally my expulsion.

Our hopes for a new party went pretty much down the drain with this and I was at loose ends. I wondered what I would do next. I hadn't yet been expelled from the CPUSA, though everyone else around me had been. I figured that they wanted to isolate me completely before they expelled me. I was then working as a waiter in a French restaurant in Greenwich Village and was quite happy with my wife and young son, Haywood, born in June 1956. Meanwhile Gwen had lost custody of her son, Leo Yuspeh, and their visits were restricted by the court to a few hours every other week in a public place. She lost meaningful contact with him and found the situation very painful.

With all these problems converging on us at once, we decided to go to Mexico to get a fresh perspective on things, study and write. I didn't know what else I could do. I flew down to Mexico and Gwen and Haywood Jr. followed me a few weeks later. We settled first in Cuautla, Morelos, and later in Mexico City, where our daughter Becky was born in 1963.

We were able to eke out an existence living off my disability pension from the VA and a little money that Gwen had. I kept in touch with things at home through correspondence with my old friend Cyril Briggs in Los Angeles. Briggs was then about seventy-two and as a leading member of the Party's local Negro Commission was waging a pretty staunch struggle against the revisionists.[28]

Only in 1959, with most of the left out of the Party, did the leadership fully expose their political positions in the draft resolution for the Seventeenth Party Convention. The resolution represented the nearly complete victory of the right and an indication to me of just how insidious and dangerous an enemy revisionism is—having point by point, step by step, cut away at all our revolutionary principles in the name of fighting for them. The right wing of the Party were not just less militant fighters, but objectively the agents of the bourgeoisie who had succeeded in gaining control of the Party.

After seeing Jackson's crude and blatantly reformist program on the Black national question, I decided to write an article for the

PA as part of the pre-convention discussion. By this time, Jackson had developed the Party's reformist line to its logical conclusion, a full blown melting pot theory, and I lambasted him accordingly. My article was never printed, but Briggs rewrote it in his name and reportedly it was distributed at the Seventeenth Party Convention by the California delegation. Though the paper caused quite a stir, the revisionist line on the Afro-American question was officially adopted at the convention—the right of self-determination formally dropped.

Briggs's paper was just what Dennis and Jackson needed to get rid of me. Following the convention, Jackson took a trip across country. On his way to Los Angeles, he stopped in Mexico City and met with a number of friends there. My good friend Elizabeth Catlett Mora was among them and asked Jackson about me. "Oh, he's been expelled," he said. "He's a good guy, but we just had some differences." And that's how I found out after thirty-six years that I had been expelled from the Communist Party USA.

And so the right was ultimately victorious in the Party's third major crisis. Under the guise of attacking an often elusive and ephemeral "left sectarianism" and "dogmatism," they destroyed the Party as a vanguard force, irrevocably shoving it down the road to revisionism and counter-revolution. It's true that there were from time to time ultra-left currents in the Party. These currents mainly developed in response to the rightism of the Party leadership, as a result of the failure to involve the cadres in political education and play a leading role in the mass movements. But only with a few exceptions could these leftist deviations have been considered the main danger to the Party. Most of what had been labeled by the leadership as "left sectarianism" were actually honest attempts to oppose the rightist bureaucracy, not the purism and isolationism, the running ahead of the masses which characterizes ultra-leftism.[29]

In basing themselves on the thesis that left sectarianism constituted the main danger and was primarily responsible for the isolation of the Party, the right obscured the whole history of class struggle in this country. It was right opportunism which destroyed the once-powerful Socialist Party. It was as we have seen, right opportunism, expressed in Lovestone's theory of continued prosperity and American exemption from economic crisis, which provoked the first Party crisis in 1927.

It was the crass opportunism and bourgeois reformism of Browder's theories of "progressive capitalism" and an extended period of "harmony of interests between capital and labor" which threw the Party into its second major crisis.

And once again, it was right opportunism, this time expressed largely in the slogan of "peaceful, parliamentary and constitutional transition to socialism," which plunged the Party into its third and fatal crisis. In this crisis, the right successfully threw the Party into a fervor over "left sectarianism," exaggerating this error in order to obscure the history of the struggle against the right danger and prevent the Party from carefully and thoroughly tracing right opportunism to its systematic maturation during the post-war years.

The proposition that left sectarianism constituted the main historical danger in the CPUSA ignored the constant pressures exerted on the Party by the forces of bourgeois ideology and capitalist development. The particular conditions which American capitalism developed under—a frontier, vast resources and natural wealth, bourgeois democracy, an ability to temporarily mediate economic slump and recession, relative periods of prosperity—all this has tended to act as a force which retards the class consciousness of broad sections of the labor movement, fostering illusions that basic change can take place within the capitalist system and inequities be solved through reform.

The development of capitalism into monopoly capitalism, imperialism and the corresponding plunder of the Caribbean nations, the Philippines and Asia, brought superprofits into the coffers of the ruling class, enabling it to cultivate and encourage—through money, prestige and influence—a labor aristocracy which serves as the lieutenants of capital within the labor movement.

This small elite section of American labor, based among the upper strata of skilled and higher paid workers, has through its leadership in the trade unions, inundated the working class with bourgeois ideology, promoting reformism, narrow self-interest and rampant jingoistic chauvinism. This "labor bureaucracy" is particularly susceptible to the imperialist propaganda of white chauvinism and has served to intensify the antagonisms between white and Black workers, dividing and splitting the working class into hostile groups, retarding the development of revolutionary class consciousness.

These objective conditions combined together to provide fertile soil for the maturing of right opportunist class collaborationism and chauvinist ideas, outlooks and policies which undoubtedly all heavily affected our Party. It was out of these concrete conditions that right opportunism developed as the main danger in the working class movement. My experience in the Party confirmed what the history of the working class struggle has shown, that in order to develop as a revolutionary vanguard, the CP must constantly struggle against the powerful pressures of bourgeois ideology within its own ranks. The Party is not separated by a Chinese wall from the corruptive influences of the bourgeois world. In the post-war period, bourgeois influences within the Party combined in effect with the pressures of imperialist repression upon the Party. As a source of revisionism, illusions about the vitality of American imperialism were reinforced now by the imprisonment and terror employed by the government against the Party.

Under these circumstances, the shallowness of the "correction" of 1945 became apparent. Illusions about the possibility of continued alliance with the liberal bourgeoisie continued to be the center of the political orientation of the Party leadership. Simultaneously, under the pressure of the Smith Act prosecutions, the Party leadership developed the theory of peaceful transition to socialism.

Without a thorough purge of Browderism, the Party preserved and built up a bureaucracy effectively insulated against the operation of the Marxist-Leninist practice of criticism and self-criticism. In this way, not only was the ideological level of our Party forced to remain at a low level, but at the same time, unification, purification and corrective replacements of leadership were made almost impossible. The end result is a party which today acts as a mouthpiece for Soviet social-imperialism, the labor aristocracy and the pro-detente sections of the U.S. ruling class.

Epilogue

> The evil system of colonialism and imperialism grew up along with the enslavement of Negroes and the trade in Negroes, and it will surely come to its end with the thorough emancipation of the black people.
>
> Mao Tse-tung[1]

By the late fifties, those of us who had defended the revolutionary position on Black liberation had been driven from the CP—either expelled or forced to resign. The Party's leaders insisted that Blacks were well on the way to being assimilated into the old reliable American "melting pot."

But the melting pot suddenly exploded in their faces. In the sixties, the Black Revolt surged up from the Deep South and quickly spread its fury across the entire country. Advancing wave upon wave—with sit-ins, freedom marches, wildcat strikes, and, finally, hundreds of spontaneous insurrections—the Black masses announced to their capitalist masters and the entire world that they would never rest until their chains of bondage were completely smashed.

This new awakening of the Afro-American people evoked the greatest domestic crisis since the thirties and it became the focal point for the major contradictions in U.S. society, the most urgent, immediate and pressing questions confronting the U.S. corporate rulers and the revolutionary forces. In its face, the ruling class employed counter-revolutionary dual tactics, both terrorist attacks on Black people, especially in the deep South, and reformist legal maneuvers in Washington.

First developing as a civil rights struggle against Jim Crow, the Revolt increasingly took on a nationalist character, culminating in the Black Power movement and projecting into the heart of modern U.S. society the demands of the unfinished democratic revolution of the Civil War and Reconstruction.

In a decade of mass movement, which saw demonstrations and uprisings in virtually every ghetto in the country, the Afro-American people put all existing programs for Black freedom to the test. Their struggle shattered the myth of peaceful imminent integration, revealing the bankruptcy of the "Free by '63" program of the old reformist leaders and their supporters in the revisionist CPUSA.

The Black upsurge had its fueling sources domestically in the combined influences of the failure of legal democratic integration and the catastrophic deterioration of the economic position of the Black masses, both absolute and relative to whites. In the fifties, the further monopolization and mechanization of agriculture had precipitated a deep agrarian crisis, throwing tens of thousands of rural Blacks off the land in the South. At the same time, the impending economic crisis, together with growing automation of industry, created an entire generation of ghetto youth in the urban areas, a "lost generation"—both north and South—with no work or prospects for work within the existing economic system. With the dispossessed Black population growing by leaps and bounds, the potential of the movement for Black Power escalated.

The Revolt was further fueled and inspired by the successes of the anti-imperialist movements of the third world, especially in the newly independent nations of Africa. This worldwide revolution of color broke the age-old feeling of isolation among the Black masses. As Malcolm X put it, "The oppressed people of this earth make up a majority, not a minority."[2]

Thus the struggle was transformed from an internal, isolated one against an apparently "invincible" ruling class, into a component part of a worldwide revolutionary struggle against a common imperialist enemy. U.S. defeats in Korea, China, Cuba, and then, Vietnam, further exploded the myth of U.S. "invincibility." Many Black Power militants drew upon the experiences of the third world liberation struggles in developing a strategy for the movement here, as well as in many instances openly expressing solidarity with liberation struggles in Vietnam, Palestine and Africa.

This anti-imperialist outlook reflected the rising mood of the times. Thus the Revolt's development confirmed our thesis that the Black movement would inevitably take a national-revolutionary, anti-imperialist direction, culminating in the demand for political power in the areas of Black concentration. Far from being simply a fight for reforms, as the revisionists claimed, the Black liberation movement became a spark, a catalyst pushing forward the whole working class and people's struggle in the U.S.

This latter point underscored the treacherous depths of the revisionist betrayal. The CPUSA did not even attempt to mobilize labor support for the Black struggle, and the labor aristocracy maintained hegemony over the workers' movement. Thus abandoned to the leadership of the chauvinist bureaucrats, sharp divisions were sown between Black and white workers. This was in clear contrast to the unity built by communists in the thirties when the Party and the working class had played a leading role in fighting for the special demands of Blacks, making the Scottsboro Boys a household word from the tenements of New York to the ghettos of Watts.

Though the revolutionary outlook and organization of communists never became the leading factor in the Revolt, the movement nonetheless made considerable gains in the course of its development. As I see it, the Revolt developed in three periods. The first began with the Montgomery Bus Boycott of 1955-56 and ended with the 1963 March on Washington. This latter protest event brought in its wake a widespread disillusionment with the reformist, legalistic and non-violent strategy of such organizations as SCLC, the Urban League and the NAACP.

The growing isolation of these "responsible" leaders and the break-up of the Kennedy-backed civil rights coalition (the "Big Five"—SNCC, SCLC, CORE, Urban League, the NAACP and the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund) ushered in the second phase of militant open revolt. This period was marked by widespread rebellions in the cities and the demand for Black Power. But lacking a Leninist vanguard linked to the masses, the movement at this point was unconsolidated. Its nationalist leadership splintered into a variety of petty bourgeois tendencies—separatist, pan-Africanist, cultural nationalist and even some terrorist tendencies. Thus the bourgeoisie was able to usher in a third phase by buying off the right wing of the Black Power movement and establishing its own brokers within it. The 1969 Black Power Conference in Newark, which was generously funded by the Ford Foundation, was the signal that this phase of the movement had begun in earnest.

FROM THE COURTROOM TO THE STREETS (1955-63)

The stage for the Black Revolt was set in 1954, the year of the Supreme Court decision outlawing school segregation. This decision, historic in its effects upon the future of the Black movement, was a tactical concession forced by the rising movement at home and especially by criticism of Jim Crow from third world and socialist countries. NAACP leaders, however, hailed the decision as a vindication of their legalistic policies.

For its part, the federal government gave hardcore Southern reactionaries the opportunity to organize and unleash the most planned and purposeful campaign of anti-Black terror since the defeat of Reconstruction.

In response, the Black movement in the South burst out from under the wraps of the old elite leadership of the NAACP and took on a mass character—defying segregation laws and directly attacking the Jim Crow system. The spark was ignited in the Montgomery, Alabama, Bus Boycott of 1955-56 under the leadership of Martin Luther King. The flames spread. In 1960, the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) began sit-in demonstrations which swept the South.

Freedom riders under the leadership of the Congress for Racial Equality (CORE) took over the spotlight in 1961 and won national support for their campaign to integrate transportation facilities. In the spring of 1963, the struggle reached a high point in the Battle of Birmingham and from there leaped over regional boundaries and spread throughout the country, uniting various classes and strata of Black people under the slogan of "Freedom Now"!

The movement exerted tremendous attractive power on all sections of the population, especially the youth, drawing sections of the white community into support and participation. The summer of 1964 saw hundreds of college students travel to Mississippi to participate in a voter registration project.

It was also in the South that the armed self-defense movement was initiated in North Carolina by Robert Williams, whose NAACP local was suspended for these activities. Based upon Black workers and war veterans, other armed groups like the Deacons for Defense and Justice in Louisiana and Mississippi won important victories against the Ku Klux Klan in the mid-sixties. It was during the Meredith March through Mississippi, which was protected by the Deacons, that the slogan of Black Power first gained national prominence in 1966.

As Chairman Mao wrote, the movement became "a new clarion call to all the exploited and oppressed people of the United States to fight against the barbarous rule of the monopoly capitalist class."[3] Movements developed among students and women, Chicano, Native American and Puerto Rican people, as well as among activists against the Vietnam War.

Alarm bordering on panic struck the ruling circles. *Time* magazine expressed the fear that the civil rights movement "will crash beyond the framework of passive resistance into new dangerous dimensions."[4] U.S. efforts to build a neo-colonial empire in the third world were further impaired as the grotesque contrast between its high-flown moral posture and the brutal reality of an organized system of racist barbarism nurtured within its own borders was further exposed. Racist police employing such methods as electric prodding irons, police dogs, high pressure hoses and the brutal beating of women, provoked angry outrage throughout the world. Its impact was especially felt in Africa, where concern about racism in the United States was expressed by the Addis Ababa Conference of African Ministers.[5]

The alarm of white ruling circles was also reflected among the top leadership of the NAACP and other reformist organizations. In order to maintain their role as "honest" brokers between the Black masses and the white rulers, they had been forced to grant some autonomy to the Southern dissident wing led by King and SCLC. Representing ministers and the Black bourgeoisie of the South, King favored a policy of non-violent, mass action. But he in turn was faced with a growing challenge from the more radical elements of the movement, especially the youth of SNCC, sections of CORE and the NAACP youth—the shock troops of the Revolt. It was among these front-line fighters that the inherent conflict between King's non-violent philosophy and direct mass action first came to a head. Under conditions prevailing in the Deep South, direct mass action and civil disobedience campaigns could develop and grow only if accompanied by organized armed self-defense. In renouncing self-defense, the movement inevitably reached an impasse there.

In situations like the heroic but unsuccessful battle of Albany, Georgia, the moral and political bankruptcy of making non-violence a principle was revealed. In Jackson, Mississippi, even after the assassination of NAACP leader Medgar Evers, little or no progress was made. Similarly in Greensboro, North Carolina, 2,000 demonstrators were jailed over the integration of two restaurants. And in Birmingham, the South's most important bastion of white supremacy, it was fourteen years until a token indictment was brought against a few of the child-murdering bombers. The upsurge of 1963 resulted in gains in other parts of the country, but practically none in the Deep South.

Even the victories that were won in desegregation and legal reforms produced no improvement in the conditions of poor and working Blacks. In the fifteen-year period between 1949 and 1964, the median annual income for non-white families increased from $1,650 to $3,800, while the median income for white families increased from $3,200 to more than $6,800 during the same period. The disparity between white and non-white annual income in 1949 had been less than $1,600. By 1964, the gap was more than $3,000.

During the economic crisis of 1958-64, the government admitted that Black unemployment was above the 10% mark and the Black-white ratio of unemployment rate was boosted from 1.6 in 1948 to 2 or 2.5 from the early fifties on. Black youth were hardest hit of all. Between the two "good" years of 1957 and 1964, their unemployment increased 51%, at the same time that one out of every six young Blacks was driven out of the official labor force.

These experiences cast doubt on the whole program of "peaceful democratic integration." Riding the tiger of the Black Revolt, King and fellow advocates of non-violence were rescued by President Kennedy. Trying to walk a tightrope between the hardcore dixiecrat defiance and surging Black militancy, the administration sought to divert the mass movement back into legalistic channels by proposing a civil rights bill. The bill's declared purpose was to get the Black movement off the street and back into the courtroom where the 100 years of litigation promised by the Southern governors could proceed. Instead of the militant protest originally planned, the 1963 March on Washington was converted into a peaceful demonstration in support of the President's civil rights bill. But even this much-vaunted march could not succeed in diverting the rising tide of rebellion. It did, however, openly expose to the masses the collusion between the Kennedy Administration and men like Whitney Young of the Urban League, Roy Wilkins of the NAACP and A. Philip Randolph. At the same time, the march leaders censored John Lewis's speech for SNCC because it attacked Kennedy's Civil Rights Bill.[6]

Malcolm X showed how the government used bribery to bring these reformist leaders to its aid in controlling the masses in March on Washington.

> When they [the administration-ed.] found out that this black steamroller was going to come down on the capital, they called in Wilkins, they called in Randolph, they called in these national Negro leaders that you respect and told them, "Call it off." Kennedy said, "Look, you all are letting this thing go too far." And Old Tom said, "Boss, I can't stop it, because I didn't start it." I'm telling you what they said. They said, "I'm not even in it, much less at the head of it." They said, "These

> Negroes are doing things on their own. They're running ahead of us." And that old shrewd fox, he said, "If you all aren't in it, I'll put you in it. I'll put you at the head of it. I'll endorse it. I'll welcome it. I'll help it. I'll join it."[7]

BLACK POWER

Following this event, mass rejection of peaceful democratic integration became apparent in the growing wave of ghetto rebellions. There were twenty-four in 1964, thirty-eight in 1966, one hundred twenty-eight in 1967 and one hundred thirty-one in the first half of 1968, the year of King's assassination.

These urban uprisings put into sharp focus the alienation of the Black masses from the old-line leaders like Roy Wilkins, A. Philip Randolph and Bayard Rustin. As the Kerner Report lamented, "Those who come forward to discourage rioting may have no influence with the rioters." The report also contained another ploy of the bourgeoisie, designed to get itself off the hook. It charged: "What white Americans have never understood—but what the Negro can never forget—is that white society is deeply implicated in the ghetto. White institutions created it, white institutions maintain it, and white society condones it."[8] By blaming everyone, including the masses of white working people, the ruling class in effect blamed no one and covered up their own crimes.

Black Power became the rallying cry of the uprisings because it summed up the main lessons learned by the masses during the civil rights phase of the movement; legal rights meant nothing without the political power to enforce them. Black Power expressed the growing consciousness of the Afro-American masses that they are an oppressed nation whose road to freedom and equality lies through taking political power into their own hands. Thus Blacks should become the controlling force in the areas of their major concentration—in the urban ghettos of the north as well as the Black Belt area of the South.

The emergence of Black Power as a mass slogan signaled a fundamental turning point in the modern Afro-American liberation struggle, carrying it to the threshold of a new phase. It marked a basic shift in content and direction of the movement, from civil rights to national liberation, with a corresponding realignment of social forces. It indicated that the Black Revolt had crashed beyond the limited goals set by the old-guard reformist assimilationist leadership of the NAACP and associates, beyond the strictures of Reverend King's non-violent holding operation, into channels leading to direct confrontation with the main enemy—the "white power" oligarchy of the imperialists. Inevitably, this struggle moved towards juncture with the anti-imperialist revolutions in the third world and with the working class movement for socialism.

The vehicle of the Revolt was an indigenous grassroots nationalism, upsurging from the poor and working masses of the urban ghettos and the poor and dispossessed farmers and sharecroppers of the Black Belt. The movement reflected their strivings to break out of the bind of racist economic and cultural subjugation, to establish for themselves the dignity of a free and equal people. Here was the mass base of SNCC, the Black Panther Party (which raised the question of armed self-defense for the urban ghettos and popularized the writings of Mao Tsetung), Malcolm X (recently split from the Black Muslims), and other revolutionary nationalists.

Afro-Americans were caught up in an assertive drive for a viable, collective identity adapted to the peculiar conditions of their development in the U.S. and their African background. Further, it was a drive to recover a cultural heritage shaped by over 300 years of chattel slavery and a century of thwarted freedom. This quest for identity as a people in its own right led ever greater segments of the Afro-American community to a fundamental reassessment of their actual status as an oppressed nation—virtual captives in the metropolitan heartland of one of the world's most powerful and predatory imperialist powers.

A growing body of young Black radical intellectuals assumed an active role in fostering Black Power nationalism. Their efforts, reflecting the spirit of the masses, produced a new cultural renaissance surpassing that of the twenties. The vanguard was an angry, alienated Black youth—a proud and sensitive young generation which refused to stagnate and die in a system which sought to destroy it.

The above developments led to a mass defection from the old guard leadership which became morally and politically isolated from the masses. The trend of Black Power nationalism rose to dominate the Black community in the second phase of the struggle. The nationalism of the sixties differed from the Garvey movement and its latter-day spiritual descendants, the Black Muslims, neo-Garveyites and others. In the main, the Black Power movement called not for escapist withdrawal, but for a fight here where Blacks live. Among some narrow nationalist sects, however, the old backward utopianism persisted.

The leadership of the Black Power movement, while having a profound and positive effect on the struggles of the Black masses—displayed its own major weakness—that of being primarily based in the Black intelligentsia and petty-bourgeoisie. This was inevitable in the face of the CPUSA's defection. The movement was hamstrung in attempting to fight U.S. imperialism without the benefit of a program of class struggle. It also deeply underestimated the potential strength of unity with the overall workers' movement in achieving the goals of the national struggle. These weaknesses contributed to the ability of the U.S. corporate establishment to temporarily cool out and buy off the Black upsurge by employing both reformist and narrow nationalist schemes.

At first Black Power activists submerged class conflicts in the movement. But soon a right wing emerged, with its base in a sector of the ghetto bourgeoisie: businessmen, ministers, professionals, poverty project leaders, Black studies professors, newly-hired lower management and token upper management. This right wing found its spokesmen in elite intellectuals like Roy Innis, Floyd McKissick and Harold Cruse. They aspired to the role of economic and political administrators of a Black "internal colony," still owned and controlled by white monopoly capitalism.

COOPTING A RIGHT WING

This perspective of pursuing the Black bourgeoisie's class interests within an imperialist framework was not fundamentally different from the integrationism of the old guard Black leaders. The more nimble members of this group hopped on the bandwagon, while others, like Whitney Young, kept a foot in both camps.

This emerging Black right wing was met half way by a white establishment in search of new allies. Facing defeats abroad and burning cities at home, the establishment was haunted by the specter of a national rebellion in its urban nerve centers. As McGeorge Bundy pointed out, if blacks burn the cities, "the white man's companies will have to take the losses."[9]

This new kind of broker spoke the language of the Black Power movement and might better lead it into safe channels, away from the confrontations which threatened domestic tranquility and international credibility. So the buffer zone between the establishment and the Black masses was extended to include the new right-wing nationalists and their social base. A wide range of corporate leaders united behind this strategy, bringing into play their tremendous powers of cooptation and manipulation. This does not mean that the bourgeoisie gave up on the old-line leadership, but rather that they concentrated their efforts on the right-wing nationalists in this particular period.

Bundy's Ford Foundation led the way, putting some of CORE's leadership on the payroll. The establishment and its new allies moved to redefine Black Power in more acceptable terms. Harvard's Kennedy Institute of Politics defined self-determination to mean community development corporations and tax incentives for investors in the ghetto; Roy Innis endorsed this formula.

Fifty corporations jointly sponsored two Black Power Conferences under Nathan Wright's leadership. To Wright, Black Power meant Black capitalism, or, as he expressed it, "The most strategic opportunity which our American capitalistic system has to preserve or strengthen itself lies in the possibility of providing the Negro community with both a substantial and immediate stake in its operation at every level."[10]

In fact, "Black capitalism" was the centerpiece of the power elite's strategy. This included a stepped-up policy of piecemeal concessions to contain and reverse the revolutionary trend by buying up and corrupting potential and actual community leaders. Richard Nixon articulated this strategy in 1968: "What most of the militants are asking is not separation but to be included in—not as supplicants, but as owners, as entrepreneurs—to have a share of the wealth and a piece of the action."[11] Sections of the ghetto entrepreneurs and professionals were ready to misuse the collective strength of the Black community to get a "piece of the action."

The crisis and ebbing of the Black Power nationalist movement was precipitated by the rise of this thoroughly reformist trend, which was backed directly by the imperialists. This new Black elite moved systematically to take over the movement, sap its revolutionary potential and restrict it to goals which U.S. capitalism was willing to concede. In this, they were aided by a growing apparatus of repression—police, FBI, CIA, National Guard and Army Intelligence—which murdered, jailed and suppressed many un-cooperative leaders. This came on the heels of Nixon's law and order, white backlash campaign of 1968. The full story of intrigue, murder, character assassination, splittism and provocative activities is only now beginning to come to light. The exposure of the FBI's notorious COINTELPRO operations was but the tip of the iceberg.

Where were the forces to give leadership to the movement in the face of this both open and covert assault by the imperialists?

Certainly they were not to be found in the CPUSA which made every effort to attack and downgrade the movement. James Jackson summed up the basic attitude of the CPUSA toward nationalism in a recent article. "The main function of nationalism," he wrote, "*whatever its form* (our emphasis), is to split and divide and fragment the international working class and the advanced contingents of the national liberation movements."[12]

Genuine communists, of course, must distinguish between the nationalism of the oppressor nations and that of the oppressed, as well as between nationalism's progressive and backward aspects.

Without the leadership of a genuine communist party, the limitations of the nationalist outlook (as I have already shown) became clear. Its leadership was unable to make a class analysis of the Black community, thus overestimating the unity between the Black masses and the Black bourgeoisie, while underestimating the need for unity with the general workers' movement.

To be sure, the upsurge spurred the political development of the Black proletariat, building on the foundations laid by the Black caucus movement of the post World War II period. Beginning in the early sixties, a new wave of Black caucuses sprung up in basic industries across the country, reaching perhaps their highest political development in the Detroit League of Revolutionary Black Workers. But, in the final analysis, the treachery of the Dennis-Hall clique prevented Black workers and the working class as a whole from playing a consistently independent and leading role as a class force during this period.

I believe that if we had had a revolutionary party in the sixties that much of the spontaneity and reactionary nationalism of the period could have been combatted. Undoubtedly, the ruling class would still have tried to split the Black Power movement, but the left wing would not have been nearly wiped out as an organized force in the Black community. If the CPUSA hadn't liquidated communist work in the South and in the factories, the sixties would have seen a consolidated proletarian force emerge in the Black Belt and the ghettos. The communist forces could have come out of the Revolt with developed cadres rooted in the factories and communities, with credibility among the masses.

THE ROAD AHEAD

Despite such shortcomings, the sixties Revolt did force concessions from the ruling class—breaking down a great deal of legal and occupational Jim Crow, enlarging the Black middle class and extending the franchise to Blacks in the South.

But have these gains exhausted the revolutionary potential of the Black movement? Have the mechanization of Southern agriculture, massive outmigrations from the Black Belt and civil rights laws wiped out the consequences of the old plantation system? Most important, have these changes wiped out the existence of an oppressed Black nation in the Deep South as so many have claimed? Is the right of self-determination for the Black Belt nation still a demand that communists should raise?

Let's take a look at current conditions. Despite the imperialist offensive against the Black masses, which resulted in tremendous outmigrations from the Black Belt homeland, there remains a stable community of Black people in the rural South and a growing Black population in the urban areas. The actual number of Blacks has steadily increased. In 1940, there were over nine million Black people in the South and by 1970 the number had increased to nearly twelve million. Over 70% of all Black people in the U.S. were born in the South and still have roots there. Within the Black Belt territory itself, despite fierce economic and political coercion, there has remained since 1930 a stable community of over five million. The "escape valve" into the northern cities is being closed by the crisis, and outmigration from the South has slowed considerably with reverse migration now becoming the dominant trend.

It is no accident that the civil rights movement first arose in the South where Blacks face the most terroristic oppression and are often denied even the most basic democratic rights. In fact, the mechanization of agriculture, which drove so many Blacks off the land in the South, provided one of the main fueling sources of the rebellion. SNCC did some of its best work in its Southern rural projects, where it took up the struggles of sharecroppers and the displaced peasantry.

Today the spiraling inflation and recession of the worst crisis in forty years still hits Blacks hardest, the victims of continued last-hired, first-fired policies and an unemployment rate twice that of whites. Recent statistics show the highest rate of unemployment among Black youth since World War II, while at the same time there have been cutbacks in Black studies and other affirmative action programs. The result is yet another "lost" generation of Black youth condemned to the margins of the workforce. Once again, the sensitive ghetto youth and students are becoming a flash point for all the contradictions of the system.

In the midst of the biggest strike wave in twenty years, the ruling class is desperately trying to exacerbate existing race differences. This accounts for the new rise of anti-busing and segregationist movements in northern cities, the rise in membership of the Ku Klux Klan and the increasing attacks on social welfare and affirmative action programs.

The crisis is also undermining the existence of the expanded Black middle class which was created by the ruling class's strategy of concessions during the "boom" years of the sixties. Business failures and service cutbacks are weakening this group economically, while fascist attacks and growing class divisions inside the Black community are eroding the political credibility of Black elected officials. In cities like Atlanta, Detroit and Newark, where Black mayors have been elected, the living and working conditions among Blacks have continued to deteriorate. Far from indicating the attainment of real political power for Afro-Americans, these politicians have been elected merely to serve as administrators for the white power structure.

This domestic situation is combined with an international situation more explosive than in the sixties, symbolized particularly by the fierce liberation struggles in southern Africa and the increasing threat of war between the two superpowers. It is only a matter of time before the smouldering embers of Black Revolt burst into flame again. As Lenin pointed out, "Capitalism is not so harmoniously built that the various sources of rebellion can immediately merge of their own accord, without reverses and defeats."[13] Whenever the next Black upsurge comes—whether as part of a general revolutionary upsurge or as signal of the movement to come—we must be prepared to bring out mass support for equality and self-determination as a special feature of the struggle for socialism.

Most assuredly, the next wave of mass struggle will begin from a higher level of consciousness, based on what the last upsurge taught the masses about the nature of the enemy and the path to liberation. In fact, the Revolt sparked an irreversible growth of Black national consciousness and brought forward a new generation of revolutionaries. A section of this movement has turned to the best experiences of the socialist countries in fighting for equality of nations and nationalities. These young fighters have become part of the growing body of cadres of the anti-revisionist communist movement.

In this regard, a great deal has been learned from the People's Republic of China, its Communist Party and its great leader, Mao Tsetung. The emphasis on testing ideas in practice, care and flexibility in applying united front tactics, of relying upon and serving the people, realism in dealing with power relationships, respect for the integrity of national minorities and for the rights of the third world nations against great nation chauvinism, the concrete analysis and application of Marxist-Leninist principles to one's own country, and the pursuing of the two-line political struggle inside the Party are all part of China's great legacy. For me, this has been a cause for great optimism for the future, especially for the new generation of communists.

This generation, left without guideposts after the betrayal of the CP, was forced to start almost from scratch. It has carried out a long march through the mass struggles of the sixties, to recapture our revolutionary heritage. It is heartening that they, along with some of us veteran fighters, are building a genuine communist party—the first in this country in decades. To this new revolutionary movement falls the task of giving leadership in the coming upsurge.

The ever deepening crisis and the increased threat of war between the two superpowers are affecting the living conditions of the broad masses of American people. At the same time, the ability of the imperialists and the labor aristocracy to grant concessions and thus buy off dissent, has been somewhat hampered by the crisis. Under such conditions and with the leadership of a new party, there is a strong possibility of building a movement based on the alliance between Blacks and other nationalities and the working class. As Chairman Mao wrote in 1968:

> The struggle of the black people in the United States is bound to merge with the American workers' movement, and this will eventually end the criminal rule of the U.S. monopoly capitalist class.[14]

I hope that this book, which sums up some of my experiences and that of many other comrades, will make some contribution to this lofty goal.

Notes

CHAPTER ONE

1. (p. 5.) W. E. B. DuBois, *Dusk of Dawn* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1940), p. 96.
2. (p. 21.) On April 12, 1864, 6,000 Confederate soldiers commanded by an ex-slave trader, Major General Nathan Forrest, overran the 600 defenders of Fort Pillow, Tennessee, including 262 Blacks. After the fort was surrendered, Forrest's troops massacred every Black soldier who failed to escape. Some were shot, others were burned or buried alive. This was in line with the official Confederate policy that Black soldiers would be treated as stolen property, not prisoners of war.

Reference to the incident can be found in the following works: Lerone Bennett, Jr., *Before the Mayflower: A History of the Negro in America* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1966), pp. 175-76; John Hope Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom,* 3rd ed. (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1967), p. 292; Carl Sandburg, *Storm over the Land* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1942), pp. 245-48; Bruce Catton, *A Stillness at Appomattox* (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1953), p. 233.

CHAPTER TWO

1. (p. 36.) "An Essay Toward a History of the Black Man in the Great War," reprinted in Julius Lester (ed.), *The Seventh Son: The Thought and Writings of W. E. B. DuBois* (New York: Random House, 1971), Vol. 2, pp. 130-31.
2. (p. 37.) Branches of the Manasseh also existed in Milwaukee and Chicago, but they had dissolved by the late twenties. See St. Clair Drake and Horace R. Cayton, *Black Metropolis* (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), vol. 2, pp. 145-46.
3. (p. 43.) Herbert Aptheker, "Negroes in Wartime," *New Masses,* April 22, 1941, p. 14.
4. (p. 43.) John Hope Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom,* 4th ed. (New York: Knopf, 1974), pp. 474-75.
5. (p. 44.) Martha Gruening, "Houston, an N.A.A.C.P. Investigation," *The Crisis,* November 1917, pp. 14-15.
6. (p. 45.) This was the story as we heard it from Company G. Slightly different versions appear in the following: Jack D. Foner, *Blacks and the Military in American History* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1974), pp. 113-16; Robert V. Haynes, "The Houston Mutiny and Riot of 1917," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly,* April 1973, pp. 418-39; and Charles Flint Kellogg, *NAACP* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1967), vol. 1, pp. 261-62.

A campaign for the freedom of the men of the Twenty-fourth was launched by the NAACP, which finally resulted in the release of the last prisoner by Roosevelt in 1938.

7. (p. 55.) This document was first published in *The Crisis,* May 1919, pp. 16-17, with this note:

"The following documents have come into the hands of the Editor. He has absolute proof of their authenticity. The first document was sent out last August at the request of the American Army by the French Committee which is the official means of communications between the American forces and the French. It represents American and not French opinion and we have been informed that when the French Military heard of the distribution of this document among the Prefects and Sous-Prefects of France, they ordered such copies to be collected and burned."

8. (p. 56.) This was how Roberts impressed many of us in the ranks at the time. Black officers, however, later told DuBois that Roberts let them run the regiment while taking credit for their exploits and conniving behind their backs to replace them with whites. See Lester, pp. 140-41.

9. (p. 66.) Charles H. Williams, *Sidelights on Negro Soldiers* (Boston: B.J. Bremmer and Co., 1923), pp. 74-75.

10. (p. 66.) Robert R. Moton, *Finding a Way Out* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, Page and Company, 1920), p. 254.

11. (p. 67.) Quoted in Monroe N. Work (ed.), *Negro Year Book* (Tuskegee Institute, Alabama: The Negro Year Book Publishing Co., 1922), p. 192.

12. (p. 80.) For a detailed description of Black stevedore units, see Lester, pp. 117-19; and Williams, pp. 138-55.

CHAPTER THREE

1. (p. 83.) Arthur I. Waskow, *From Race Riot to Sit-In* (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1966), pp. 12, 111-12.

2. (p. 84.) Claude McKay, *Selected Poems* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1953), p. 36.

3. (p. 87.) Allan H. Spear, *Black Chicago: The Making of a Negro Ghetto* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), pp. 36-41, and 151-55. Also see William M. Tuttle, Jr., "Labor Conflict and Racial Violence: The Black Worker in Chicago, 1894-1919," *Labor History,* Summer 1969, pp. 408-32.

4. (p. 87.) Spear, p. 141.

5. (p. 93.) In the wake of mass actions in Philadelphia and Boston, the film was temporarily banned in many cities, including Chicago, where the NAACP and the *Chicago Defender* were active in the campaign.

6. (p. 93.) These states included parts of New England, New York, Indiana, Michigan and Illinois. The Klan was first reorganized in 1915 by William J. Simmons who advertised the reborn KKK in an Atlanta paper, alongside an ad for the opening of *Birth of a Nation.* According to David Chalmers, the KKK grew from several thousand members in 1919 to nearly 100,000 by summer 1921, and up to 3,000,000 by the midtwenties. See David M. Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1965), pp. 29-31, 291.

7. (p. 94.) See W. E. B. DuBois, *Black Reconstruction in America* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1935), pp. 711-28.

8. (p. 98.) Martin Madden, the white congressman from the first district, was the grand patron of Black post office employees. From his position on the House Postal Committee, he built a reputation for getting his Black constituents a good share of post office jobs. See Harold F. Gosnell, *Negro Politicians* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1935), pp. 307-08, 316-17.

9. (p. 99.) *Ibid.,* pp. 302-18; and Henry McGee, "The Negro in the Chicago Post Office," unpublished master's thesis (University of Chicago, 1961), pp. 31-36.

10. (p. 100.) DuBois, *Black Reconstruction,* pp. 718-19.

11. (p. 103.) Amy Jacques Garvey, *Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey* (New York: Atheneum, 1969), vol. 1, pp. 4, 8.

12. (p. 104.) There are many examples of pre-Garvey nationalism in the U.S., but Martin Delany is one of the most modern-sounding. In the conclusion to his book, *The Condition, Elevation, Emigration, and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States, Politically Considered* (New York: Arno Press, 1968) pp. 209-10, he writes:

"We are a nation within a nation; as the Poles in Russia, the Hungarians in Austria; the Welsh, Irish and Scotch in the British Dominions....The claims of no people, according to established policy and usage, are respected by any nation, until they are presented in a national capacity."

13. (p. 105.) Edmund David Cronon, *Black Moses* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1955), p. 197.

14. (p. 106.) Spear, p. 135.

15. (p. 108.) Garvey, vol. 2, pp. 69-70.

16. (p. 111.) W. E. B. DuBois, "Back to Africa," *The Century Magazine,* February 1923, p. 547. History repeated itself forty years later when the Black Muslims' public contacts with ultra-racists caused them to lose many of their more revolutionary followers. This was exposed in the March 1966 issue of the radical monthly magazine, *Now* (p. 10):

"If Americans—and Negroes in particular—were astonished when a member of the American Nazi Party was accorded a place of honor at a Black Muslim conclave not long ago, Malcolm indicated that Muslim ties with the oil-rich supporters of the Ku Klux Klan were deep and vast. James Venable, a Klan lawyer, had defended the New Orleans mosque following a raid by police and charges of insurrectionist activity. Malcolm said he himself had accompanied Elijah Muhammad to an incredible meeting in 1961 at Magnolia Hall in Atlanta, Georgia, at which Elijah's dream of a Black nation within the United States was solemnized in a treaty with officers of the Klan. Maps were drawn 'ceding' the Black Muslims parts of South Carolina and Georgia, an act to be effectuated when the right wing forces came to power."

CHAPTER FOUR

1. (p. 123.) Frederick G. Detweiler, *The Negro Press in the U.S.* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1922), p. 77.
2. (p. 124.) *Amsterdam News,* September 5 and 19, 1917, quoted in Theodore Draper, *American Communism and Soviet Russia* (New York: The Viking Press, 1960), p. 323.
3. (p. 124.) "Liberty For All!" *Amsterdam News,* 1918, quoted without full date in Draper, p. 323.
4. (p. 125.) *The Crusader,* November 1921, quoted in Draper, pp. 505-06.
5. (p. 125.) In 1946, while researching material for *Negro Liberation,* I had occasion to look over the file of *The Crusader* in the Schomburg Collection of the New York Public Library. It seemed at the time to be almost complete. I learned later from Briggs, who sought to consult these files in 1967, that they had disappeared. Theodore Draper, in preparation for his hatchet job on communism, *American Communism and Soviet Russia*, was able to track down fourteen copies in the Howard University Library. For the present, pending my own research, I am relying partially on Draper's quotes, but not, of course, upon his interpretation.
6. (p. 125.) *The Crusader,* April 1921, p. 9, quoted in Draper, p. 324.
7. (p. 129.) The Bugs Club was a corner of Washington Park used for open-air speaking in the twenties and thirties. The Dill Pickle Forum gathered on the north side on Saturdays under the leadership of the anarchist, Jack Jones. A wide variety of radicals attended the meetings and spoke there, including Emma Goldman.
8. (p. 130.) See Spear, *Black Chicago,* pp. 198-99.
9. (p. 138.) Ray Ginger, *The Bending Cross* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1949), p. 260.
10. (p. 138.) *International Socialist Review,* November 1903, pp. 258-59.

11. (p. 138.) *Ibid.,* January 1904, p. 396.
12. (p. 140.) In 1922, right-wing union leaders drove the Communist Party (then called the Workers Party) out of the Conference for Progressive Political Action. This was the organization which ran LaFollette for president in 1924 when he got one sixth of the vote. In 1923, the Farmer-Labor Party, led by "center" union leaders like Fitzpatrick of the Chicago Federation of Labor, split with the Workers Party. This marked the defeat of the Party's early efforts to build a farmer-labor party. For Foster's analysis, see William Z. Foster, *History of the Communist Party of the United States* (New York: International Publishers, 1952), pp. 211-23. For Ruthenberg's version, see Charles E. Ruthenberg, *From the Third Through the Fourth Convention of the Workers (Communist) Party of America* (Chicago: Daily Worker Publishing Co., 1925), pp. 10-14.
13. (p. 142.) Ruthenberg, p. 18.
14. (p. 143.) "Proceedings of the Fourth National Convention of the Workers (Communist) Party of America (1925)," p. 119.
15. (p. 143.) *Ibid.*
16. (p. 143.) The Trade Union Educational League (TUEL) was founded in 1920 to organize the "militant minority" in the trade unions. William Z. Foster and other TUEL leaders joined the Workers Party in 1921. The following year, the TUEL launched a successful campaign to win unions representing millions of workers to support its main demands: for a labor party; for amalgamation (industrial unionism); and for recognition of Soviet Russia.
17. (p. 145.) Sterling D. Spero and Abram L. Harris, *The Black Worker* (New York: Atheneum, 1968), p. 425.
18. (p. 146.) James W. Ford, *The Negro and the Democratic Front* (New York: International Publishers, 1938), p. 82.

CHAPTER FIVE

1. (p. 148.) The January 17, 1926, edition of the Sunday *New York Times* carried an article titled "Communists Boring into Negro Labor." It included such sensational subheads as:

- Taking Advantage of the New Moves Among Colored Workers Here to Stir Unrest
- Not Much Progress Yet
- Ten Young Negroes are Sent to Moscow Under Soviet "Scholarships" to Study Bolshevism
- Nuclei Sought in Unions
- Labor Federation and Older Leaders of the Race Seek Antidotes in Real Labor Unions.

2. (p. 151.) John Reed, *Ten Days that Shook the World* (New York: Boni and Liverwright, 1919).

3. (p. 157.) Stalin saw the university having two lines of activity: "one line having the aim of creating cadres capable of serving the needs of the Soviet republics of the East, and the other line having the aim of creating cadres capable of serving the revolutionary requirements of the toiling masses in the colonial and dependent countries of the East." J.V. Stalin, "The Political Tasks of the University of the Peoples of the East," *Works* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1953), vol. 6, p. 382.

4. (p. 157.) See J.V. Stalin, *Foundations of Leninism* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1975), pp. 72-83.

5. (p. 159.) *Ibid.*, p. 77.

6. (p. 171.) Permit me briefly to define these terms which I will be using quite often throughout the rest of the book.

The Comintern (Communist International or Third International) was founded in Moscow in March 1919 and dissolved in 1943. The Comintern was founded in a period of revolutionary upsurge and in direct opposition to the leaders of the Second International, who had endorsed support for their own imperialist bourgeoisies in the First World War. A voluntary association of communist parties, the Comintern gave revolutionary leadership during a very important period in history, building communist parties around the world and developing united fronts against fascism in the thirties. Particularly significant among its theoretical contributions were the theses on the national and colonial questions.

The Crestintern, or Peasant International, was founded at the International Peasant Conference in Moscow in 1923, with the express purpose of "coordinating peasant organizations and the efforts of the peasants to achieve workers' and peasants' internationals." It was dissolved in 1939.

The Profintern, or Red International of Labor Unions (RILU), was founded in 1921 and played an important role in the development of the labor movement until its dissolution in the late thirties. The Profintern's program called for the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. To this end, it gave leadership to the struggles of the working masses worldwide, adding, as Foster wrote, "a new dimension" to the labor movement by carrying trade unionism to the colonial and semi-colonial countries.

See also William Z. Foster, *History of the Three Internationals* (New York: International Publishers, 1955).

The District Organizer, also referred to as the "D.O.," is the head of the leading body in the Party district and is in overall charge of the district's work. The D.O.'s primary responsibility is to give political leadership in carrying out the Party's line.

CHAPTER SIX

1. (p. 176.) During the French Revolution, on July 27, 1794 (the ninth of Thermidor, according to the revolutionary calendar), a group later called the Thermidorians seized power, executing Robespierre, Saint-Just and more than eighty other radical Jacobins. This began a counter-revolutionary trend which led to Napoleon's coup in 1799 and the restoration of several European monarchies in 1815.
2. (p. 176.) Stalin, *Works,* vol. 5, p. 394.
3. (p. 177.) *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks)—Short Course* (New York: International Publishers, 1939), p. 257. In this work, the Central Committee of the CPSU(B) sums up Lenin's views on the NEP:

> A certain freedom of trade would give the peasant an economic incentive, induce him to produce more and would lead to a rapid improvement of agriculture...on this basis, the state-owned industries would be restored and private capital displaced...strength and resources having been accumulated, a powerful industry could be created as the economic foundation of Socialism, and then a determined offensive could be undertaken to destroy the remnants of capitalism in the country.

4. (p. 177.) *Ibid.,* p. 257.
5. (p. 178.) Quoted in Stalin, *Works,* vol. 6, p. 393.
6. (p. 179.) Quoted in Stalin, *Works,* vol. 6, pp. 383-84.
7. (p. 179.) V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1964), vol. 21, pp. 418-19. It is here that Lenin shows, in opposition to Trotsky, that imperialism and especially war "strengthened the economic and political factors that are impelling the petty bourgeoisie, including the peasantry, to the left."
8. (p. 179.) Stalin, *Works,* vol. 6, p. 384. Stalin pointed out that "Lenin speaks of the *alliance* between the proletariat and the labouring strata of the peasantry as the basis of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Trotsky sees a *'hostile collision'* between the 'proletarian vanguard' and 'the broad masses of the peasantry.' "
9. (p. 180.) Stalin, *Works,* vol. 6, p. 382.
10. (p. 180.) *Ibid.,* p. 385.
11. (p. 180.) Lenin, *Collected Works,* vol. 21, p. 419.
12. (p. 181.) Lenin, "The Revolutionary Proletariat and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination," *ibid.,* p. 409.

13. (p. 181.) In the fifties and sixties, many communist parties dropped their revolutionary principles and launched vicious attacks on Stalin, opening the way for a temporary resurgence of Trotskyism. A new generation then learned first-hand how Trotskyism uses revolutionary phrases to cover its attacks on every progressive movement, taking every opportunity to slander socialist China. They promoted slogans like "All Indochina Must Go Communist" as an excuse for their opposition to the popularly-supported National Liberation Front of Vietnam. In current struggles in the Black liberation movement, they have liquidated the necessity for a revolutionary program of struggle, promoting instead reliance on the courts and other brands of reformism.

14. (p. 183.) *International Press Correspondence,* January 12, 1927, p. 63. (Hereinafter cited as *Inprecorr.)*

CHAPTER SEVEN

1. (p. 198.) See J.T. Murphy, "The First Years of the Lenin School," *Communist International,* September 30, 1927, pp. 267-69.

2. (p. 201.) Born in 1862 in Staten Island, New York, Ella Reeve Bloor (Mother Bloor) joined the Socialist Labor Party during the 1890s. She quickly became a leading activist and organizer, participating in many important labor struggles of the time, including the 1914 miners' strike in Ludlow, Colorado. In 1921, she became a founding member of the Communist Party and continued her activity in the revolutionary movement until her death in the fifties. See Mother Bloor's autobiography, *We Are Many* (New York: International Publishers, 1940).

3. (p. 202.) Lenin returned to Petrograd from exile on April 3, 1917. The next day he delivered his theses, "The Tasks of the Proletariat in the Present Revolution," *Collected Works,* Vol. 24, pp. 19-26. These "April Theses" outlined a comprehensive program of transition from the bourgeois-democratic to the proletarian-socialist revolution, including nationalization of land and banks, workers' control of industry and a Soviet republic. Lenin's line of "No support for the Provisional Government" was resisted by many in the Party who had been calling for a policy of pressuring the Provisional Government. But at the Petrograd City Conference of Bolsheviks, two weeks later, Lenin's theses won the day. The all-Russian Conference of Bolsheviks, over the opposition of Kamenev and Rykov, also adopted the line of the April Theses and put forward the slogan, "All Power to the Soviets."

4. (p. 203.) The following are some of the most outstanding of Fox's works: *The Class Struggle in Britain in the Epoch of Imperialism*

(London: M. Lawrence, 1932); *Genghis Khan* (London: John Lane, 1936); *Lenin: A Biography* (London: V. Gollancz, 1933); *Marx, Engels and Lenin on the Irish Revolution* (New York: Workers Library Publishers, 1944); *The Novel and the People* (New York: International Publishers, 1937).

5. (p. 203.) See "The Revolutionary Proletariat and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination,"Lenin, *Collected Works,* vol. 21, pp. 407-14, and "The Irish Rebellion of 1916," vol. 22, pp. 353-58.

6. (p. 204). The German government allowed Lenin and other Russian exiles to pass through Germany on their way back to Russia in the spring of 1917. They were required to travel in a "sealed coach," cut off from all direct contact with the outside.

7. (p. 204.) By the late thirties, the Moscow Trials had exposed the existence of the "Bloc of Rights and Trotskyites." This bloc was actually a gang, which, from within the CPSU(B) and organized into illegal, terroristic cells, sought to overthrow the dictatorship of the proletariat in the Soviet Union. Its membership included followers of Trotsky's "ultraleft" theory of permanent revolution, as well as the followers of Bukharin's right opportunist line. In the final analysis, it was proven that this bloc actually conspired with agents of German and Italian fascism, as well as with agents of other imperialist powers, to open the doors for a foreign invasion of the Soviet Union. This plot was smashed by the Soviets and the bloc's members were either executed or sent to prison for life. During my stay in the Soviet Union (which ended a good five years before this conspiracy was fully exposed), I was acquainted with a number of people who were later proven to be members of the bloc. Most were not major figures, but played a minor role in the conspiracy. Regretfully, my good friend, Nasanov, was among them. See Michael Sayers and Albert E. Kahn, *The Great Conspiracy* (London: Red Star Press, 1975).

8. (p. 205.) James Connolly (1868-1916) was a great Irish labor leader, socialist and a revolutionary nationalist who was executed by the British after playing a leading part in the unsuccessful Easter uprising against colonial rule. He lived in the U.S. from 1903-10, and was a founding member of the IWW. Connolly was active in many mass labor and political struggles in this country, including the fight against the sectarianism of the SLP and Daniel DeLeon's leadership of it.

9. (p. 205.) Murray later became general secretary of the Irish Party.

10. (p. 206.) Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Correspondence 1846-1895* (New York: International Publishers, 1936), p. 281.

11. (p. 206.) Lenin, *Collected Works,* vol. 21, pp. 104, 293.

12. (p. 206.) *Ibid.,* p. 357.

13. (p. 208.) A.M. Simons, *Social Forces in American History* (New York: Macmillan, 1911), p. 274.
14. (p. 209.) Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The Civil War in the United States* (New York: International Publishers, 1937).
15. (p. 210.) *Ibid.,* vol. 25, pp. 274-82.
16. (p. 210.) *Ibid.,* vol. 24, p. 169.
17. (p. 210.) *Ibid.,* vol. 26, p. 258.
18. (p. 211.) *Ibid.,* vol. 26, p. 258.
19. (p. 211.) *Ibid.,* vol. 30, p. 165.
20. (p. 214.) The African National Congress (ANC) was formed in 1912 to oppose the color bar in South Africa.
21. (p. 217.) H. J. and R. E. Simons, *Class and Colour in South Africa* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1969), p. 402.

CHAPTER EIGHT

1. (p. 219.) Lenin, "Preliminary Draft Theses on the National and Colonial Questions," *Collected Works,* vol. 31, pp. 144-51.
2. (p. 220.) "...a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture." Stalin, "Marxism and the National Question," *Works,* vol. 2, p. 307.
3. (p. 223.) Lenin, "Draft Theses," p. 148.
4. (p. 223.) *Ibid.,* p. 144.
5. (p. 223.) Sen Katayama, the veteran Japanese communist, was a special friend of the Black students in Moscow. He was born to a Japanese peasant family, was educated in the U.S. and became one of the founders of the Japanese Social Democratic Party in 1901. A member of the ECCI, he had spent several years in exile in the U.S. and was considered somewhat of an expert on the Afro-American question. Katayama was most interested in our studies and our views on the situation in the U.S., particularly as it concerned Blacks. "Old Man" Katayama knew all about white folks, and we Black students regarded him as one of us. We often came to him with our problems and he always had a receptive ear. It was Katayama who told us of Lenin's earlier writings about U.S. Blacks and Lenin's views on the Black Belt. He died in Moscow in 1933 at the age of 74.
6. (p. 223.) *Der Zweite Kongress der Kommunist. Internationale: Protokoll der Verhandlungen vom 19. Juli in Petrograd und vom 23. Juli bis 7. August, 1920 in Moskau* (Hamburg, 1921), p. 156.
7. (p. 223.) *Ibid.*
8. (p. 224.) Lenin, "New Data on the Laws Governing the development

of Capitalism in Agriculture. Part One: Capitalism and Agriculture in the United States of America," *Collected Works,* vol. 22, p. 25.
9. (p. 224.) *Ibid.,* p. 27.
10. (p. 224.) Lenin, "Statistics and Sociology," *Collected Works,* vol. 23, p. 271-77.
11. (p. 225.) *Ibid.*
12. (p. 225.) *Ibid.,* p. 276.
13. (p. 225.) Speech of Huiswood (Billings), *Inprecorr,* July 25, 1924, pp. 514-15.
14. (p. 226.) Speech of Thalheimer, *Inprecorr,* July 25, 1924, pp. 514-15.
15. (p. 226.) *Protokoll: Fünfter Kongress der Kommunistischen Internationale,* Band II (Verlag Carl Hoym Nachf), p. 699.
16. (p. 227.) Stalin, "The Fifteenth Congress of the C.P.S.U. (B.). December 2-19, 1927, Political Report of the Central Committee, December 3," *Works,* vol. 10, p. 297.
17. (p. 228.) Speech of James Ford, *Inprecorr,* August 3, 1928, p. 772.
18. (p. 236.) Simons, *Class and Colour,* p. 390.
19. (p. 236.) "The South African Question (Resolution of the E.C.C.I.)," *The Communist International,* December 15, 1928, p. 54.
20. (p. 238.) *Ibid.*, p. 52.
21. (p. 238.) *Ibid.,* pp. 54, 56.
22. (p. 239.) Simons, *Class and Colour,* p. 395.
23. (p. 239.) Edward Roux, *Time Longer than Rope: A History of the Black Man's Struggle for Freedom in South Africa,* 2nd ed. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964), p. 13.
24. (p. 240.) Simons, *Class and Colour,* p. 398.
25. (p. 240.) *Ibid.,* p. 398.

CHAPTER NINE

1. (p. 246.) "Resolution of the Comintern on the American Question. Endorsed by the Presidium of the Executive Committee of the Communist International, July 1, 1927," *The Daily Worker,* August 3, 1927.
2. (p. 247.) A. Lozovsky, "Results and Prospects of the United Front (in connection with the coming Profintern, R.I.L.U., Congress)," *The Communist International,* March 15, 1928, p. 146.
3. (p. 249.) Three of Foster's works which are of special interest to this period are: *Toward Soviet America* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1932); *From Bryan to Stalin* (New York: International Publishers, 1937); *Pages from a Worker's Life* (New York: International Publishers, 1939).
4. (p. 255.) A. Shiek, "The Comintern Programme and the Racial Problem," *The Communist International,* August 15, 1928, pp. 407-11.

5. (p. 255.) *The Daily Worker,* September 22, 1927.
6. (p. 255.) *The Daily Worker,* February 17, 1928.
7. (p. 257.) *La Correspondence Internationale,* August 1, 1928, pp. 9-23. Only the French translation of Bukharin's report was available to me.
8. (p. 258.) Stalin, "The Right Deviation in the C.P.S.U.(B.) in April, 1929 (Verbatim Report)," *Works,* vol. 12, p. 23.
9. (p. 258.) *Ibid.,* p. 21.
10. (p. 258.) *The Daily Worker,* December 11, 1928. This issue of the *Daily Worker* was not available to me; the reference is taken from Draper, p. 501n.13.
11. (p. 258.) John Pepper, "America and the Tactics of the Communist International," *The Communist,* April 1928, pp. 219-27.
12. (p. 259.) William Z. Foster, *History of the Communist Party of the United States* (New York: International Publishers, 1952), p. 266.
13. (p. 261.) Pepper wrote the resolution on the Negro question for the Plenum of the Political Committee on May 30, 1928. This resolution was the basis for the section on Negro work in the "Resolution on the Report of the Political Committee (Adopted by the May 1928 Plenum of the CEC of the Workers Party)," *The Communist,* July, 1928, pp. 418-19.
14. (p. 262.) See note 4.
15. (p. 262.) John Pepper, "American Negro Problems," *The Communist,* October 1928, p. 630.
16. (p. 263.) Speech of Ford, *Inprecorr,* October 25, 1928, pp. 1345-47.
17. (p. 263.) *Ibid.*
18. (p. 263.) Speech of Otto Hall (Jones), *Inprecorr,* October 30, 1928, pp. 1392-93.
19. (p. 266.) Speech of Lominadze, *Inprecorr,* November 8, 1928, p. 1462.
20. (p. 267.) Speech of Otto Hall (Jones), pp. 1392-93.
21. (p. 267.) John Pepper, "Amerikanische Negerprobleme," *Die Kommunistische Internationale* (Berlin), September 5, 1928, pp. 2245-52.
22. (p. 267.) James Ford and William Wilson (Patterson), "Zur Frage der Arbeit der amerikanischen Kommunistischen Partei unter den Negern," *Die Kommunistische Internationale* (Berlin), August 29, 1928, pp. 2132-46.
23. (p. 267.) Harry Haywood, "Das Negerproblem und die Aufgaben der K.P. der Vereinigten Staaten," *Die Kommunistische Internationale* (Berlin), September 5, 1928, pp. 2253-62.
24. (p. 268.) "CI Resolution on Negro Question in USA," *The Daily Worker,* February 12, 1929; "Theses on the Revolutionary Movement in the Colonies and Semi-Colonies," *Inprecorr,* December 12, 1928, p. 1674.
25. (p. 269.) "Theses on the Revolutionary Movement," p. 1674.

26. (p. 270.) See Simons, *Class and Colour,* p. 406.
27. (p. 271.) Speech of Bunting, *Inprecorr,* August 3, 1928, p. 780; and *Inprecorr,* September 19, 1928, p. 1156.
28. (p. 271.) *Ibid.*
29. (p. 272.) Speech of Bunting *Inprecorr,* November 8, 1928, p. 1452.
30. (p. 272.) I know of no written record of either Rebecca Bunting's or Manuilsky's remarks since they were made at the commission meetings, and these were not recorded in *Inprecorr.*
31. (p. 272.) This position was stated in the section on South Africa in the "Theses on the Revolutionary Movement in the Colonies."
32. (p. 273.) "Theses on the Revolutionary Movement in the Colonies, p. 1661.
33. (p. 274.) Speech of Murphy, *Inprecorr,* October 30, 1928, p. 1410.
34. (p. 275.) Speech of Kuusinen, *Inprecorr,* November 21, 1928, p. 1524.
35. (p. 275.) *Ibid.*
36. (p. 275.) This last extemporaneous remark does not appear in the protocol of the congress. But I distinctly remember it, for we laughed about the matter for years afterward. Perhaps for political reasons it was later extracted.
37. (p. 276.) Speech of Lozovsky, *Inprecorr,* August 18, 1928, p. 914.
38. (p. 277.) Speech of Lominadze, *Inprecorr,* August 23, 1928, p. 932.
39. (p. 277.) *Ibid.*
40. (p. 277.) Declaration of Comrade Johnstone, *Inprecorr,* November 21, 1928, p. 1539.
41. (p. 278.) See Sayers and Kahn, *The Great Conspiracy,* pp. 324-25.
42. (p. 280.) In reference to this question, Stalin wrote:

> The persons constituting a nation do not always live in one compact mass; they are frequently divided into groups, and in that form are interspersed among alien national organisms. It is capitalism which drives them into various regions and cities in search of a livelihood. But when they enter foreign national territories and there form minorities, these groups are made to suffer by the local national majorities in the way of restrictions on their language, schools, etc. Hence national conflicts.

Stalin, "Marxism and the National Question," *Works,* vol. 2, pp. 334-35.

CHAPTER TEN

1. (p. 282.) *The Daily Worker,* October 3, 1928.
2. (p. 284.) The letter was published in *The Daily Worker,* December 26, 1928. This issue was not available to me, and the quotations were taken from Draper, *American Communism,* p. 385.

3. (p. 288.) "Open Letter to the Convention of the Workers (Communist) Party of America from the E.C.C.I.," *The Daily Worker,* March 4, 1929.
4. (p. 292.) The speeches of Stalin were published in the pamphlet *Stalin's Speeches on the American Communist Party* (New York: International Publishers, 1929). The speeches of Molotov and Kuusinen were published in the proceedings of the Dies Committee: U.S. House Special Committee on Un-American Propaganda Activities in the U.S., *Investigation of Un-American Propaganda Activities in the United States* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1939-40), pp. 7124-33.
5. (p. 296.) *Stalin's Speeches,* p. 11.
6. (p. 296.) *Ibid.,* p. 12.
7. (p. 297.) *Ibid.,* p. 18.
8. (p. 297.) *Ibid.,* p. 20.
9. (p. 297.) *Un-American Propaganda Activities,* p. 7133.
10. (p. 298.) "Should the final decision of your committee follow the outline given in the last Plenary session of the American Commission [this refers to the speeches of Comrade Stalin and Molotov—ed.] then the membership of our Party would have to come to the conclusion that the ECCI desires to destroy the CC (of the CPUSA) and therefore follows the policy of legalizing the past factionalism of the opposition bloc and inviting its continuation in the future." *The Daily Worker,* June 12, 1929.
11. (p. 298.) "To All Members of the Communist Party of the United States—An Address by the Executive Committee of the Communist International," *The Daily Worker,* May 20, 1929 and *Inprecorr,* June 7, 1929, pp. 598-600.
12. (p. 299.) *Un-American Propaganda Activities,* p. 7129.
13. (p. 300.) *The Daily Worker,* June 7, 1929.
14. (p. 301.) *The Daily Worker,* May 20, 1929.
15. (p. 301.) "Important Passages from the Declaration of May 14, Submitted to the Presidium," *The Daily Worker*, June 12, 1929.
16. (p. 302.) *Stalin's Speeches,* pp. 21-22.
17. (p. 302.) *Ibid.,* p. 23.
18. (p. 302.) *Ibid.,* p. 22.
19. (p. 302.) *Ibid.,* pp. 27-29.
20. (p. 303.) *Ibid.;* p. 31.
21. (p. 304.) *Ibid.,* p. 39.
22. (p. 307.) See Don Kurzman, "Lovestone's Cold War—The AFL-CIO has its own CIA," *The New Republic,* June 25, 1966.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

1. (p. 317.) Cyril Briggs, "The Negro Question in the Southern Textile

Strikes," *The Communist,* June 1929, pp. 324-28; "Further Notes on Negro Question in Southern Textile Strikes," *The Communist,* July 1929, pp. 391-94; "Our Negro Work," *The Communist,* September 1929, pp. 494-501.
2. (p. 317.) Briggs, "Our Negro Work," p. 494.
3. (p. 319.) *Daily Worker,* October 4, 1929.
4. (p. 320.) Briggs, "Our Negro Work," p. 498.
5. (p. 321.) *Daily Worker,* October 17, 1929.
6. (p. 322.) Otto E. Huiswood, "World Aspects of the Negro Question," *The Communist,* February 1930, p. 133.
7. (p. 322.) N. Nasanov, "Against Liberalism in the American Negro Question," *The Communist,* April 1930, pp. 296-308.
8. (p. 322.) Harry Haywood, "Against Bourgeois-Liberal Distortions of Leninism on the Negro Question in the United States," *The Communist,* August 1930, p. 706.
9. (p. 322.) Stalin, "Marxism and the National Question," *Works,* vol. 2, p. 304.
10. (p. 323.) Haywood, p. 696.
11. (p. 323.) *Ibid.,* p. 698.
12. (p. 324.) A. Sik, "To the Question of the Negro Problem in the U.S.," in *Revolutionary East,* No. 7, 1929, quoted in Haywood, *ibid.,* p. 708.
13. (p. 324.) Stalin, "The National Question Once Again," *Works,* vol. 7, p. 225.
14. (p. 325.) From Haywood, p. 707.
15. (p. 326.) William Z. Foster, *History of the Communist Party,* p. 282.
16. (p. 326.) S. Mingulin, "The Crisis in the United States and the Problems of the Communist Party," *The Communist,* June 1930, p. 500.
17. (p. 326.) Earl Browder, "The Bolshevization of the Communist Party," *The Communist,* August 1930, p. 688.
18. (p. 327.) *The Daily Worker,* June 23, 1930.
19. (p. 327.) Browder, p. 689.
20. (p. 327.) *The Daily Worker,* June 23, 1930.
21. (p. 327.) Browder, p. 690.
22. (p. 328.) I first met George Padmore in December 1929, when Foster had brought him to Moscow. I got to know him quite well and on a number of occasions visited him in his room at the Lux Hotel. I remember him as a slim, handsome, ebony-hued young man of medium height, neatly dressed. A native of Trinidad, he had studied journalism at Howard University. He joined the YCL and then the CP in Washington, D.C. Later he was assigned to work with the TUUL as a national organizer. He was a good speaker and a prolific writer.

At the time I sized him up as a pragmatist with only a superficial grasp of Marxist theory. Politically, he appeared to be a staunch supporter of the fight for independence in Africa and the West Indies, but was adamantly opposed to the right of self-determination for U.S. Blacks, whom he regarded not as a nation, but as an oppressed racial minority. I was to clash with him publicly several years later. See also p. 429n. 14.

23. (p. 330.) A. Lozovsky, *Inprecorr,* August 21, 1930, p. 782.

24. (p. 330.) A. Lozovsky, "Ten Years of the Red International of Labor Unions," *Inprecorr,* July 31, 1930, pp. 675-76.

25. (p. 331.) A. Lozovsky, "The World Crisis, Economic Struggles and the Tasks of the Revolutionary Trade Unions," *Inprecorr,* September 4, 1930, pp. 867-74; September 11, 1930, 891-96; September 18, 1930, pp. 919-24.

26. (p. 332.) Documents from this commission are not available. Consequently, I have had to rely on my memory, as well as consultations with comrades active at the time.

27. (p. 333.) "Resolution on the Negro Question in the United States," *The Communist International,* February 1, 1931, p. 66.

28. (p. 334.) *Ibid.,* p. 65.

29. (p. 334.) *Ibid.,* p. 66.

30. (p. 334.) *Ibid.,* p. 67.

31. (p. 335.) *Ibid.,* p. 68.

32. (p. 336.) *Ibid.,* p. 70.

33. (p. 336.) *Ibid.,* pp. 71-72.

34. (p. 337.) *Ibid.,* p. 73.

35. (p. 337.) *Ibid.,* p. 73.

36. (p. 337.) *Ibid., p. 72.*

37. (p. 338.) Ibid., p. 74.

CHAPTER TWELVE

1. (p. 342.) *The Daily Worker*, April 2, 1934.

2. (p. 351.) The Comintern had called on all communist parties to bolshevize themselves by cleansing their organizations of the remnants of the old socialist parties. One aspect of this was building a centralized organization based on shop nuclei in place of a loosely federated organization based on election districts and language federations.

3. (p. 357.) *The New York Times*, March 2, 1931.

4. (p. 357.) The day after the trial, Yokinen was arrested and soon released on bail. The government continued its efforts to deport him and was ultimately successful after the Supreme Court upheld the deportation order on March 11, 1932.

5. (p. 359.) See Dan T. Carter, *Scottsboro: A Tragedy of the American South* (Oxford University Press, 1969), for a detailed account of the trial.
6. (p. 359.) As quoted in Harry Haywood and Milton Howard, *Lynching* (New York: *Daily Worker,* 1932), p. 13.
7. (p. 360.) "Is the N.A.A.C.P. Lying Down On Its Job?" *The Crisis,* October 1931, p. 354.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

1. (p. 364.) Foster, *History of the Communist Party*, p. 285.
2. (p. 365.) *Ibid.,* p. 257.
3. (p. 368.) United Press International dispatch quoted in *The Daily Worker,* June 9, 1931.
4. (p. 371.) Formerly a member of the Central Committee of the German Communist Party, Ewart led an opposition to the Thaelmann leadership. As a result, he was pulled out of Germany and assigned to international work. Later, while representing the Comintern in Brazil, he was captured and tortured to death by the regime of the dictator Vargas.
5. (p. 373.) "Lessons of the Strike Struggles in the U.S.A.: Resolution of the E.C.C.I.," *The Communist,* May 1932, pp. 402-13.
6. (p. 375.) Tom Mooney and Warren K. Billings were arrested in July 1916 for their activities in opposition to World War I. Their frame-up conviction attracted support from workers all over the world. Due to this mass movement and, in particular, the efforts of the ILD, Mooney was finally released in January 1939 and Billings in October of that year. Mooney's health was ruined by twenty-two years in prison and he died in 1942.
7. (p. 376.) See "The NAACP Prepares New Betrayals of the Negro Masses," *Daily Worker,* May 28, 1932, and *Daily Worker,* May 30, 1932; "The Scottsboro Decision," *The Communist,* May 1932, pp. 1065-75; Harry Haywood and Milton Howard, *Lynching.*

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

1. (p. 380.) William Z. Foster, *History of the Communist Party*, p. 289.
2. (p. 380.) *Ibid.,* p. 291.
3. (p. 381.) Angelo Herndon, *Let Me Live* (New York: Arno Press, 1969), p. 192.
4. (p. 381.) *Ibid.,* p. 238.
5. (p. 381.) *Ibid.,* p. 240.
6. (p. 382.) "The International Situation and the Tasks of the Sections of the Communist International: Theses on the Report of Comrade

Kuusinen," *Inprecorr,* October 6, 1932, pp. 939-43.
7. (p. 384.) Langston Hughes, *I Wonder As I Wander* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1964), pp. 69-70, 73-80, 89-90, 94-99, See also *The Crisis,* January 1933, p. 16. See Louise Thompson's response in the February 1933 issue, p. 37. Delegation members Poston and Moon issued a statement in Berlin claiming that the "forces of American race prejudice have triumphed" in canceling the film. This statement was published in *The New York Times* and *The Amsterdam News* of October 10, 1933. Similar statements were also issued by two other members of the twenty-two member delegation. Hughes and fourteen others issued a statement repudiating these slanders. See *The Daily Worker,* October 5, 1933, and October 15, 1933.
8. (p. 385.) Hughes, pp. 76-77.
9. (p. 388.) Walter Duranty of *The New York Times* is the only American newsman I know of who wrote favorable and accurate reports about the Soviet Union in this period.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

1. (p. 391.) *The New York Times,* April 12, 1933, as quoted in Carter, *Scottsboro,* p. 247.
2. (p. 392.) In 1932 my close friend, William L. Patterson, had been elected national secretary of the ILD at its Cleveland convention. Earl Browder and I attended as delegates from the Party's Central Committee. We pushed for Patterson's election, but Pat, a brilliant dynamic man, needed no pushing! He was quite popular, having played a leading role in publicizing the Scottsboro case.

Louis Engdahl, former national secretary of the ILD, was on tour of Europe and the Soviet Union with Scottsboro mother, Ada Wright, at the time of the convention. He was elected chairman of the ILD at that time, but died while on tour in Europe.
3. (p. 392.) See Carter, p. 248.
4. (p. 393.) At this time, the LSNR and the ILD were involved in a number of local struggles against police brutality and lynching, which raised similar slogans. Most notably, we helped to build a broad united front on Maryland's Eastern Shore. A reign of terror had struck the area after the legal lynching of Euel Lee and the lynching of George Armwood. Both men were Black and both were innocent.

At the initiation of the LSNR, we built the Baltimore Anti-Lynch Conference (November 18-19, 1933). Some 773 delegates, Black and white, attended, including Monroe Trotter, who along with DuBois was a co-founder of the Niagara movement, Dr. Harry F. Ward of the Union

Theological Seminary in New York and Mary Van Cleek of the Russell Sage Foundation. Even some of the local NAACP types were forced to attend.

I believe that the widely publicized movement around the conference was successful in bringing a temporary halt to the open terror on the Eastern Shore. Masses of people became aware that the deaths of Armwood and Lee were not isolated incidents. The anti-lynching movement won many new friends and supporters as a result of the conference.

5. (p. 394.) Ruby Bates was one of the two women supposedly raped by the nine youths. She recanted her testimony at the Decatur, Alabama, trial of Haywood Patterson and became an active member of the defense movement.

6. (p. 395.) "The Scottsboro Struggle and the Next Steps: Resolution of the Political Bureau," *The Communist,* June 1933, pp. 575-76, 578-79.

7. (p. 396.) Hosea Hudson, *Black Worker in the Deep South* (New York: International Publishers, 1972), p. 57.

8. (p. 397.) The following account of the sharecroppers' struggles is based on what I learned at the time from personal observations and reports of comrades. Much of it is confirmed by Stuart Jamieson, *Labor Unionism in American Agriculture,* Bureau of Labor Statistics Bulletin No. 836 (1945), pp. 290-98; and Dale Rosen, *The Alabama Sharecroppers Union,* Radcliffe Honors Thesis (1969), pp. 19-20, 30-41, 48, 56, 130-35.

9. (p. 399.) *The Daily Worker,* December 28, 1932.

10. (p. 399.) *Ibid.,* December 21-22, 1932, and April 17, 1933.

11. (p. 400.) *Ibid.,* January 7 and 9, 1932.

12. (p. 400.) *Ibid.,* April 27, 1933.

13. (p. 404.) Benjamin J. Davis, *Communist Councilman from Harlem* (New York: International Publishers, 1969) p. 44. See also pp. 27, 34, 40, 43, 46-48, 51.

14. (p. 407.) Kenneth E. Barnhart, "A Study of Homicide in the United States," *Birmingham-Southern College Bulletin* (May 1932), p. 9. Figures for 1930.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

1. (p. 417.) "The Eighth Convention of Our Party," *The Communist,* May 1934, p. 428.

2. (p. 418.) *The Daily Worker,* April 7, 1934.

3. (p. 419.) *Ibid.,* April 4, 1934.

4. (p. 419.) The full text of Browder's report appeared in *The Daily*

Worker, April 14, 1934.
5. (p. 420.) This report was published as a pamphlet, *The Road to Negro Liberation* (New York: Workers Library Publishers, 1934).
6. (p. 422.) DuBois, *Dusk of Dawn,* p. 290.
7. (p. 423.) As cited in Harry Haywood, *Negro Liberation* (Chicago: Liberator Press, 1976), p. 180.
8. (p. 423.) In looking at the top NAACP leadership, we can see that this analysis still holds true today. Despite the crises within the organization brought about by periodic depressions and mass upsurges such as the revolt of the sixties, its leadership still reflects the strivings and ambitions of the top layer of the educated Black middle class. Their strategy is to enlarge the Black middle class in order to strengthen reformist illusions and extend their class as a buffer against the masses.
9. (p. 423.) Haywood, *Road to Negro Liberation,* p. 6.
10. (p. 424.) Haywood, *Negro Liberation,* p. 194.
11. (p. 426.) "Program of the Nationalist Movement for the Establishmnt of a Forty-Ninth State," as quoted in Haywood, *Road to Negro Liberation,* p. 28.
12. (p. 427.) Press release of the Peace Movement to Liberia, as quoted in Haywood, *Road to Negro Liberation,* p. 28.
13. (p. 429.) William N. Jones in the *Baltimore Afro-American,* August 4, 1934, as quoted in Haywood, *Road to Negro Liberation,* p. 35.
14. (p. 429.) Padmore had worked with the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers after it was founded at the Hamburg Conference in 1930. (See Chapter Eleven.) Other members of the committee removed him in 1933, however, after he put forward his fascist version of pan-Africanism, which proposed that Africans look to the Japanese Emperor for protection.

Padmore's brand of "pan-Africanism" set him in opposition to the national aspirations of the emerging black majority states in Africa. As late as 1956, in referring to a Black Republic in Azania (South Africa), he wrote:

> Africans had never demanded any such nonsense....They, like the Negroes in America, while opposed to all forms of racial disability have never demanded separatism, either in the form of Apartheid or "Native Republic." Rather, the Africans have always demanded full citizenship rights within a multi-racial society. They therefore looked with deep suspicion upon the new Communist slogan of a Native Republic, which they interpreted as an attempt to segregate them into some sort of Bantu state....

See Richard Gibson, *African Liberation Movements* (London:

Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 37. See also "Earl Browder Replies," *The Crisis,* December 1935, p. 372.

15. (p. 430.) "Report to the Seventeenth Party Congress," *Works,* vol. 13, p. 369.

16. (p. 431.) *Ibid.*

17. (p. 431.) William Odell Nowell persisted in his activities after the convention and was finally expelled from the Party. He later testified before the Dies Un-American Activities Committee and revealed that he had been a government agent while a member of the CPUSA.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

1. (p. 443.) *The Daily Worker*, August 5-8, 10, 11 and 13, 1931.

2. (p. 444.) *Ibid.,* September 29, 1932.

3. (p. 448.) Dimitrov, *The United Front* (New York: International Publishers, 1938), p. 10.

4. (p. 454.) *The Daily Worker,* September 2, 1935.

5. (p. 455.) *The Chicago Defender,* September 7, 1935.

6. (p. 456.) *Ibid.*

7. (p. 456.) *The Daily Worker,* September 2, 1935.

8. (p.459.) As quoted in James W. Ford, "The National Negro Congress," *The Communist*, April 1936, pp. 323-24.

I plan to speak of Randolph a number of times during the course of this book and, therefore, I feel it necessary at this point to briefly give my estimation of the man. Randolph is a social democrat. At the height of his career, he was probably the most influential Black union executive in the U.S. His role in the AFL-CIO, however, has always been the loyal opposition. At every annual convention, he would make the same criticisms of discrimination in the unions, but always in a manner acceptable to the bureaucrats.

Randolph was a board member of the NAACP and had broad influence, not just among Black workers, but in the Black community as well. As one of the very few Black labor bureaucrats in the U.S., he was widely acclaimed to represent Black labor. In reality, he shared the basic ideology of the labor aristocracy: support for U.S. imperialism, belief in the common interests of labor and management, negotiation by bureaucrats as a substitute for militant rank-and-file action, and consistent anticommunism. Randolph helped to legitimize the labor aristocracy's claim to speak for Black working people. Despite his anti-communism, our leadership of the mass struggles of Blacks often forced him to unite with us. Such was the case with the NNC.

9. (p. 459.) *The Daily Worker,* February 17, 1936.

10. (p. 464.) *Ibid.,* June 24 and 25, 1936.
11. (p. 465.) *Ibid.,* June 27, 1936.
12. (p. 466.) *Ibid.,* November 8, 1936.
13. (p. 466.) Foster, *History of the Communist Party,* p. 333.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

1. (p. 467.) Lines from Pablo Neruda's "Landscape after a Battle," *España en el corazón,* translated by Paul Elitzik.
2. (p. 468.) Hugh Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War* (New York: Harper and Row, 1961), pp. 419-21.
3. (p. 468.) Certain nationalists asked why the International Brigades had not intervened in Ethiopia. This question struck home at the genuine sentiments of the masses in support of the Ethiopian people's cause and was used to confuse matters in the Black community. Indeed there was worldwide support among the international communist and anti-fascist forces for the Ethiopian people, but Haile Selassie had neither called for nor desired the assistance of the International Brigades.
4. (p. 470.) I have relied on these works to refresh my memory and found them to be some of the best: Arthur Landis, *The Abraham Lincoln Brigade* (New York: The Citadel Press, 1967); Robert Colodny, *The Struggle for Madrid* (New York: Paine-Whitman, 1958); and Hugh Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War.*
5. (p. 473.) The POUM—the Workers Party of Marxist Unification—was a Trotskyist group; their line denied the bourgeois-democratic nature of the struggle in Spain and called for immediate direct revolution for socialism. The POUM's followers charged that the united people's front government was betraying that revolution and put forward the slogan, "You may win the war and lose the revolution." They staged an uprising in Barcelona on May 3, 1937, and virtually opened up the Aragon front to the fascists.
6. (p. 478.) With the defeat of Republican Spain in 1939, Dolores Ibarruri (La Pasionaria) fled to Moscow. She remained there until May 1977. I was sorry to see that Ibarruri supported the revisionist takeover in the Soviet Union and, by the late fifties, had become a leading spokesperson for revisionism worldwide. Since her return to Spain, she has become a supporter of the Euro-Communist brand of revisionism.
7. (p. 486.) According to Landis (pp. 207, 325), Usera was later found to be working for U.S. Army Intelligence.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

1. (p. 491.) Copic was dismissed from command on July 4, 1938

(Landis, p. 505). He then went to the Soviet Union, where he was purged in the course of Soviet preparations for war with Germany. See Vincent Brome, *The International Brigades* (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1966), pp. 276-77.
2. (p. 492.) Briggs was readmitted in the early forties, following mass protests from the rank and file. Moore, however, refused the Party's offer to reinstate his membership, though he remained a Party sympathizer.
3. (p. 492.) *The Communist,* January 1938, pp. 62-74.
4. (p. 492.) T.R. Bassett, "The 'White' South and the People's Front," *The Communist,* April 1938, pp. 369-80.
5. (p. 494.) *Is Japan the Champion of the Colored Races?* (New York: Workers Library, 1938).
6. (p. 501.) For the history of the NMU, see William L. Standard, *Merchant Seamen: A Short History of Their Struggles* (New York: International Publishers, 1947), pp. 54-128, 170, 190-94. See also Joseph P. Goldberg, *The Maritime Story: A Study in Labor-Management Relations* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958), pp. 130-97.
7. (p. 516.) *The New York Times,* June 24, 1941.
8. (p. 527.) *The Daily Worker,* May 27, 1945.
9. (p. 527.) Peter Calvocoressi and Guy Wint, *Total War: The Story of World War II* (New York: Pantheon, 1972), pp. 861-62.
10. (p. 528.) *Political Affairs,* July 1945, pp. 640-54.

CHAPTER TWENTY

1. (p. 530.) Earl Browder, "Teheran—History's Greatest Turning Point," *The Communist,* January 1944, pp. 3-8.
2. (p. 530.) *Teheran, Our Path in War and Peace* (New York: International Publishers, 1944).
3. (p. 531.) Browder, "Teheran–History's Greatest Turning Point," p. 8.
4. (p. 531.) Browder, *Teheran,* p. 67.
5. (p. 531.) *Ibid.,* pp. 79-80.
6. (p. 532.) Earl Browder, "On the Negroes and the Right of Self-Determination," *The Communist,* January 1944, p. 84.
7. (p. 533.) Stuart Jamieson, *Labor Unionism in Southern Agriculture,* p. 298.
8. (p. 533.) The Farmers Union of Alabama agitated for populist-style cooperatives and federal regulation of markets and prices. Traditional reformist demands rather than the right of the tiller to the land he tilled characterized its work. Although the SCU was always overwhelmingly Black, it was an integrated union and stood in principle for unity. Particularly after the reputation of the SCU was established, many white

croppers and tenants joined up. In contrast, a Farmers Union organizer explained that "the Farmers Union is proud of its large colored membership. But just as America had more white farmers than colored, so has the union. In Opelousas, Louisiana, we had an instance of colored farmers crowding out the white at an open meeting. They later realized that their enthusiasm had worked against them. Both white and colored generally prefer to have their own locals and meet separately." (Dale Rosen, *The Alabama Sharecroppers Union,* p. 116.

9. (p. 533.) Rosen, pp. 112-16. Reverend Charles Coughlin, a fascist demagogue, violently criticized everything progressive and aimed at establishing a fascist United States. He had an estimated ten million listeners to his weekly radio broadcast and launched the National Union for Social Justice in 1934, along with the notorious Christian Front with its organized groups of hoodlums and storm troopers.

10. (p. 534.) James Ford, "Negro People Unite for Victory," *The Communist,* July 1943, p. 643.

11. (p. 535.) *The Daily Worker,* April 4, 1945.

12. (p. 535.) James Ford, "Teheran and the Negro People," *The Communist,* March 1944, p. 264. Later Ford, who was not so nimble in recanting Browder's line as most of the Party leadership, fell from his leading position in Afro-American work.

13. (p. 535.) See Earl Browder, "Production for Victory," *The Communist,* January 1943, pp. 10-29. See also Browder, "The Economics of All-Out War," *The Communist,* October 1942, pp. 791-808.

14. (p. 536.) Foster addresses the effects of Browderism on mass work in *History of the Communist Party,* pp. 432-33.

15. (p. 536.) *The Daily Worker,* July 28, 1945. See also Earl Browder, *Why America is Interested in the Chinese Communists,* as cited in Foster, pp. 419-20.

16. (p. 537.) Prior to the arrival of the Duclos letter, there had been what could be described as a passive revolt of the rank and file. Some 18% of the membership failed to enroll in the CPA when the Party was liquidated. Referring to a report made by John Williamson in June 1945, Harrison George stated that "the true indicator of membership, dues payment, had fallen to a national average of 58%; in industrial districts as low as 32%." Harrison George, *The Crisis in the C.P.U.S.A.* (mimeographed pamphlet, 1947), p. 120.

The Party never recovered its membership and Foster states that in January 1947, membership was 59,172—down from its peak of at least 80,000 and perhaps as high as 100,000 during the war. Foster, p. 437.

17. (p. 537.) Browder refused to recognize his errors and was removed from leadership. He declined the offer of a minor Party position and soon

resorted to factionalism. This led to his expulsion in February 1946.
18. (p. 538.) Dennis, Williamson, Thompson and Foster made up the National Secretariat chosen after the Emergency Convention—all had been members of the small (nine-man) National Board of the CPA. Only a year later, in July 1946, was a new member—Henry Winston—added to this inner circle in the secretariat.
19. (p. 539.) Harrison George, p. 121.
20. (p. 540.) Foster's letter was not published until July 1945.
21. (p. 540.) See Harrison George, p. 23.
22. (p. 541.) William Z. Foster, "Concluding Remarks at the Convention," *Political Affairs,* September 1948, pp. 824-25.
23. (p. 542.) "Note by W. Z. Foster," *Political Affairs,* July 1945, p. 655.
24. (p. 542.) "Foster's Letter to the National Committee," *Political Affairs,* July 1945, pp. 648-49.
25. (p. 543.)"Discussion Article by Claudia Jones," *Political Affairs,* August 1945, pp. 717-20.
26. (p. 544.) James Allen, *The Negro Question in the United States* (New York: International Publishers, 1936).
27. (p. 547.) Later the Cuban Party, under Roca's leadership, came to support Batista. They followed the Soviet Party into the revisionist swamp and Roca became famous for denouncing the Cuban guerrillas as adventurists only a few months before Castro came to power. As the Cuban government moved closer to the USSR, Blas Roca's and the Cuban Party's differences with Castro seemingly evaporated.
28. (p. 548.) Much of Browder's line and the Party's opportunism were concealed from the masses of Party members and supporters. I myself didn't know about the dissolution of the SCU until 1948.
29. (p. 550.) Civil Rights Congress, *We Charge Genocide* (New York: 1951).
30. (p. 551.) Claudia Jones, p. 718. Emphasis in the original.
31. (p. 551.) *Ibid.*, p. 719. Emphasis in the original.
32. (p. 552.) Max Weiss, "Toward Clarity on the Negro Question," *Political Affairs,* May 1946, p. 461.
33. (p. 552.) Francis Franklin, "The Status of the Negro People in the Black Belt and How to Fight for the Right of Self-Determination," *Political Affairs,* May 1946, p. 443.
34. (p. 553.) Doxey A. Wilkerson, "The Negro and the American Nation," *Political Affairs,* July 1946, p. 657. Quote italicized in original.
35. (p. 553.) Stalin, "Concerning the National Question in Yugoslavia," *Works,* vol. 7, p. 73.
36. (p. 553.) James S. Allen, "The Negro Question," *Political Affairs,* November 1946, pp. 1046-56, and December 1946, pp. 1132-50.

37. (p. 554.) *Ibid.*, p. 1147.
38. (p. 554.) Harry Haywood, "Toward a Program of Agrarian Reforms for the Black Belt," *Political Affairs,* September 1946, pp. 855-64, and October 1946, pp. 922-39.
39. (p. 555.) See Nat Ross, "Two Years of the Reconstituted Communist Party in the South," *Political Affairs,* October 1947, pp. 923-35, for a description of the liquidationist effects of Browderism in the South and developments since the Party was reconstituted.
40. (p. 556.) Lem Harris, "Toward a Democratic Land Program for the South," *Political Affairs,* March 1949, pp. 87-96.
41. (p. 557.) Eugene Dennis, "Concluding Remarks on the Plenum Discussion," *Political Affairs,* January 1947, pp. 9-10.
42. (p. 557.) *Ibid.*
43. (p. 558.) Benjamin J. Davis, "The Negro People's Liberation Movement," *Political Affairs,* September 1948, p. 889.
44. (p. 558.) Robeson had recently become quite unpopular with the government, particularly the State Department, when in Paris he declared that in the case of a U.S. attack on the Soviet Union, Afro-Americans would refuse to fight.
45. (p. 559.) "The Present Situation and the Next Tasks: Resolution of the National Convention of the Communist Party, U.S.A., adopted July 28, 1945," *Political Affairs,* September 1945, p. 820.
46. (p. 559.) James W. Ford Section of the Communist Party, Puerto Rican Concentration Section, Section Committee, *Sweep Revisionism Out of Our Party!* (1958), p. 8. This pamphlet was written by James Keller and will be cited hereafter under his name.
47. (p. 559.) The Smith Act, passed in June 1940, provided long sentences for the crime of "teaching and advocating the overthrow of the United States government by force and violence," and for conspiring to do this. It also forced the Hitler-like finger-printing and registration of 3,600,000 non-citizen foreign born.
48. (p. 560.) *The Daily Worker,* November 18, 1946.
49. (p. 561.) Author interview with Jessie Gray, May 1973.
50. (p. 561.) Author interview with Jessie Gray, April 6, 1975.
51. (p. 564.) Goldberg, *The Maritime Story,* p. 259.
52. (p. 565.) Harry Haywood, *Negro Liberation.* The revisionist clique quickly let the book go out of print and it remained largely unavailable until it was reprinted (Chicago: Liberator Press, 1976).
53. (p. 567.) Foster was severed from the case on account of health. Those who did go to trial were Eugene Dennis, general secretary; Henry Winston, organizational secretary; John Williamson, labor secretary; Jack Stachel, education secretary; Robert Thompson, chairman of the

New York district; Benjamin Davis, New York City councilman; John Gates, editor of the Daily Worker; Irving Potash of the Fur Workers Union; Gil Green, chairman of the Illinois District; Carl Winter, chairman of the Michigan district; and Gus Hall, chairman of the Ohio district.

54. (p. 567.) Eugene Dennis, "The Fascist Danger and How to Combat It," *Political Affairs,* September 1948, p. 806.

55. (p. 567.) William Z. Foster, "Concluding Remarks at the Convention," *Political Affairs,* September 1948, p. 830.

56. (p. 567.) Dennis, "The Fascist Danger," p. 817.

57. (p. 567.) "Draft Resolution for the National Convention," *Political Affairs,* June 1948, p. 500.

58. (p. 567.) Dennis, "The Fascist Danger," p. 800.

59. (p. 568.) Davis, "The Negro People's Liberation Movement," p. 889.

60. (p. 568.) Foster, "Concluding Remarks," p. 829.

61. (p. 569.) *Ibid.,* p. 824.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

1. (p. 570.) See R. Palme Dutt, *Britain's Crisis of Empire* (New York: International Publishers, 1950), p. 34.

2. (p. 571.) See Cedric Belfrage, *The American Inquisition, 1945-1960* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1973) for more on the repressive laws and activities of this period.

3. (p. 571.) The Attorney-General's list numbered some 160 groups. The House Un-American Activities Committee list ran to 608 relief, defense, fraternal, trade union, educational, veterans', Negro, women's and youth organizations. See Foster, *History of the Communist Party,* p. 508.

4. (p. 573.) *Ibid.,* p. 509.

5. (p. 574.) Earlier expressions of this revisionist theory had appeared in Party publications, for example, James Allen's "Peaceful Transition," in *People's World,* December 13, 1946. But it was during the trials that this first became the Party's official line.

6. (p. 575.) Foster, pp. 555-56.

7. (p. 575.) William Z. Foster, "The Party Crisis and the Way Out: Part I," *Political Affairs,* December 1957, p. 49.

8. (p. 575.) Foster, *History of the Communist Party,* pp. 518-19.

9. (p. 586.) James Keller, *Sweep Revisionism Out of Our Party,* p. 13.

10. (p. 586.) William Z. Foster, "On the Party Situation," *Political Affairs,* October 1956, p. 32.

11. (p. 587.) Pettis Perry, "Destroy the Virus of White Chauvinism," *Political Affairs,* June 1949, pp. 1-13.

12. (p. 589.) Harry Haywood, "Phony War Against White Chauvinism—1949-51," unpublished paper.

13. (p. 589.) This was before the rise of Black Power, when "Black" became a term of pride rather than a racial slur. Lloyd Brown exposed the absurdity of this semantic game in "Words and White Chauvinism," *Masses and Mainstream,* February 1950, pp. 3-11.

14. (p. 590.) Earl Conrad was the author of *Harriet Tubman* (New York: Paul S. Eriksson, 1943), and together with Haywood Patterson of *Scottsboro Boy* (New York: Collier, 1969).

15. (p. 590.) Earl Conrad, *Rock Bottom* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1952).

16. (p. 593.) *Political Affairs,* July 1953, pp. 17-32.

17. (p. 594.) Doxey Wilkerson, "Race, Nation and the Concept 'Negro,'" *Political Affairs,* August 1952, p. 15.

18. (p. 595.) *Ibid.,* pp. 14-15.

19. (p. 595.) Harry Haywood, "Further on Race, Nation and the Concept 'Negro,' " *Political Affairs,* October 1952, p. 49.

20. (p. 597.) Doxey Wilkerson, "The 46th Annual Convention of the NAACP," *Political Affairs,* August 1955, p. 1.

21. (p. 597.) See U.S. Bureau of the Census, *The Statistical History of the United States from the Colonial Times to the Present* (Stamford, Connecticut: Fairfield Publishers, 1965), Series G169-70, p. 168.

Since this post-war rise, the ratio has fluctuated between 50% and 60% as shown by the same source. Part of the dramatic increase during World War II reflected the migration of Blacks from rural and other Southern jobs to unionized industries in the north. It has been pointed out (Harold M. Baron, "The Demand for Black Labor: Historical Notes on the Political Economy of Racism," *Radical America,* March-April 1971, p. 29) that Blacks made gains both north and South, reflecting the wartime labor shortage. When this shortage disappeared and Black-labor unity disintegrated, intensified oppression counteracted the effects of continued migrations and there was no further improvement in Black-white income ratios. See Harold M. Baron and Bennett Hymer, "The Negro Worker in the Chicago Job Market, "in Julius Jacobson (ed.), *The Negro and the American Labor Movement* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co., Anchor Books, 1968), pp. 240-43.

22. (p. 599.) Benjamin J. Davis, *The Negro People on the March* (New York: New Century Publishers, 1956), p. 5.

23. (p. 600.) As quoted in the *Daily Worker,* January 11, 1955.

24. (p. 600.) Charles P. Mann, *Stalin's Thought Illuminates Problems of the Negro Freedom Struggle* (New York: National Education Department of the CPUSA, 1953), p. 10.

25. (p. 600.) Frederick G. Hastings and Charles P. Mann, "For a Mass Policy in Negro Freedom's Cause," *Political Affairs,* March 1955, pp. 11-12.
26. (p. 601.) The 1955 Asian-African conference, held in Bandung, Indonesia, was the first such conference of third world countries to be held without participation by the imperialist powers.
27. (p. 601.) Pettis Perry, "The Third Annual Convention of the National Negro Labor Council," *Political Affairs,* February 1954, p. 2.
28. (p. 602.) Davis, p. 31.
29. (p. 602.) In 1962, I found out just how sincere Randolph was about building the Black caucus movement. A group of us in Local 17 of the Waiters Union in Los Angeles had brought charges of discrimination against our union secretary and built a caucus. Later we expanded the thing on a citywide basis and brought in some young Blacks from the auto and ship-building industries. After some discussion, we decided that it would strengthen our position to become affiliated with a national organization like the NALC. Randolph, however, staunchly refused our repeated requests for a charter.
30. (p. 602.) *Political Affairs,* December 1952, p. 10.
31. (p. 603.) National Committee, CPUSA, "The American Way to Jobs, Peace, Democracy (Draft Program of the Communist Party)," *Political Affairs,* April 1954, p. 15.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

1. (p. 606.) John Gates, "Time for a Change," *Political Affairs,* November 1956, p. 50. The kinship of ideas between Browder and Gates is reflected in Browder's introduction to Gates's autobiography, *The Story of an American Communist* (New York: Thomas Nelson's, 1958). Browder writes that when "Gates left the communist movement, this reflected not some merely personal revulsion...but was rather a break with the very foundation of communism." (p. viii.) He credits Gates with having the courage to denounce "their [Marxist-Leninists'—ed.] most sacred dogmas in the columns of *The Daily Worker."* (p. ix.) And he concludes that Gates's book will be welcomed by the young, who, "while they have learned to avoid the mistakes that ruined the communist movement, have by no means lost that eternal questing spirit of youth that in an earlier generation led them to communism, but which today will surely find a more reliable channel." (p. ix.) Browder clearly sees Gates in his own image, a redeeming force for "American communism.
2. (p. 606.) Though quite unaware of it at the time, I was given some indication of the shape of things to come at a reception I attended at the

Soviet Embassy in 1954. The reception was given by Andrei Vyshinsky, an outstanding Bolshevik and then Soviet Ambassador to the United Nations, in honor of the Thirty-seventh Anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution.

Gwen and I were talking with one of the ambassador's young assistants. "Do you know what's going on in our Party—all the rightwing developments?" I asked.

"Oh, don't worry Comrade Haywood, the Soviets will overtake the U.S. in production and all the world's problems will be solved!" was his ready reply.

It was all so quick that I really didn't catch its full significance. Gwen and I were walking out of the embassy when she asked if I had heard what the young man had said, and she repeated his words for me. As I realized much later, this was an early enunciation of the revisionist "three P's"—peaceful competition, peaceful coexistence and peaceful transition to socialism.

3. (p. 607.) Benjamin Davis, *The Negro People on the March,* p. 32.

4. (p. 608.) William Z. Foster, "On the Party Situation," *Political Affairs,* October 1956, pp. 15-45.

5. (p. 608.) *Ibid.*

6. (p. 609.) Harry Haywood, *For a Revolutionary Position on the Negro Question* (Chicago: Liberator Press, 1975), p. 23.

7. (p. 610.) See *Proceedings (abridged) of the 16th National Convention of the Communist Party, U.S.A.* (New York: New Century Publishers, 1957), p. 47. Hereinafter cited as *Proceedings.*

8. (p. 613.) James E. Jackson, Jr., "Communist Relations to the Negro People's Movement," *Sixteenth National Convention Discussion Bulletin No. 2,* November 27, 1956, p. 9.

9. (p. 614.) Al Lannon, *Proceedings,* p. 121.

10. (p. 615.) *Proceedings,* p. 108.

11. (p. 615.) *Ibid.,* p. 50.

12. (p. 616.) *Ibid.,* p. 235.

13. (p. 616.) *Ibid.,* p. 236.

14. (p. 616.) *The New York Times,* May 11, 1957.

15. (p. 616.) *Political Affairs,* December 1957, pp. 47-61, and January 1958, pp. 49-65.

16. (p. 616.) *Ibid.,* April 1959, pp. 33-43.

17. (p. 616.) *Ibid.,* March 1959, pp. 22-31.

18. (p. 616.) *Ibid.,* p. 31.

19. (p. 617.) *New York Times,* February 1, 1959, and February 7, 1959.

20. (p. 618.) Benjamin Davis, "Let's Get Going," New York State Communist Party, *Party Voice,* April 1958, p. 8. (The *Party Voice* was an

inner-Party discussion bulletin.)
21. (p. 618.) John Gates, *The Story of an American Communist,* pp. 188, 193.
22. (p. 619.) Paul Robeson, *Here I Stand* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971).
23. (p. 619.) Harry Haywood, *For a Revolutionary Position,* p. 17.
24. (p. 620.) James Allen, "Some New Data Toward Understanding the Position of Negroes in the U.S. Today," *Discussion Bulletin No. 2,* p. 12.
25. (p. 620.) Harry Haywood, *For a Revolutionary Position,* p. 21.
26. (p. 620.) "Declaration of Communist and Workers Parties of Socialist Countries," *Political Affairs,* December 1957, p. 87.
27. (p. 621.) *Vanguard,* September 1958, p. 4. (Vanguard was the organ of the POC.)
28. (p. 623.) Briggs was able to build a circle around himself in the somewhat liberal atmosphere of the Southern California Party. Social Democrats like Dorothy Healey and others in the Party, who held a position somewhat to the right of the national committee, actively fostered a climate of "letting all flowers bloom." In reality, they hoped to provide a cover for their own attacks on Marxism-Leninism and their struggles with the Dennis clique.
29. (p. 624.) Because of the many distortions of ultra-leftism, I feel it necessary to give the reader a definition of this phenomenon. The "leftist" form of opportunism, ultra-leftism, covers itself with super-revolutionary rhetoric and phrase mongering, but inevitably leads to isolation from and disdain for the working class and its ability to make revolution. While being left in its form, ultra-leftism is right in its essence, manifesting itself as a tendency to overestimate the degree of class consciousness of the masses, belittling the necessity to prepare the masses for revolution through the daily struggle for immediate demands. Ultra-leftism sees the proletariat as capable of making revolution without any allies, through "pure" class struggle.

The class base of this deviation, as Stalin described it, is "newcomers" to the proletariat from the peasantry, petty-bourgeoisie or intelligentsia. Those who "have brought with them into the working class their customs, their habits, their waverings and their vacillations. This stratum constitutes the most favourable soil for all sorts of anarchist, semianarchist and 'ultra-Left' groups." (Stalin, "Once More on the Social-Democratic Deviation in Our Party," *Works,* vol. 9, p. 11.)

EPILOGUE

1. (p. 628.) Mao Tsetung, "Statement Calling on the People of the World to Unite to Oppose Racial Discrimination by U.S. Imperialism

and Support the American Negroes in their Struggle against Racial Discrimination" (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1964), p. 6.

2. (p. 629.) George Breitman, ed., *Malcolm X Speaks* (New York: Grove Press, 1965), p. 218.

3. (p. 632.) "Statement by Comrade Mao Tsetung, Chairman of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, in Support of the Afro-American Struggle against Violent Repression" (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1968), p. 2.

4. (p. 632.) *Time,* June 6, 1963.

5. (p. 633.) Held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in May 1963, this was the founding conference of the Organization of African Unity (OAU).

6. (p. 634.) James Foreman, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries* (New York: Macmillan, 1972), pp. 331-37.

7. (p. 635.) Breitman, pp. 14-15.

8. (p. 635.) *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1968), p. vii.

9. (p. 638.) Robert L. Allen, *Black Awakening in Capitalist America* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Co., 1970), p. 72.

10. (p. 639.) Allen, p. 161.

11. (p. 639.) Allen, p. 229.

12. (p. 639.) James Jackson, "On Certain Aspects of Bourgeois Nationalism," *Political Affairs,* September 1977, p. 39.

13. (p. 642.) Lenin, "The Discussion on Self-Determination Summed Up," *Collected Works,* vol. 22, p. 358.

14. (p. 644.) Mao Tsetung, "Statement in Support of the Afro-American Struggle," p. 4.

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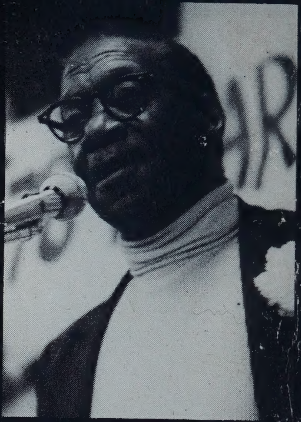

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